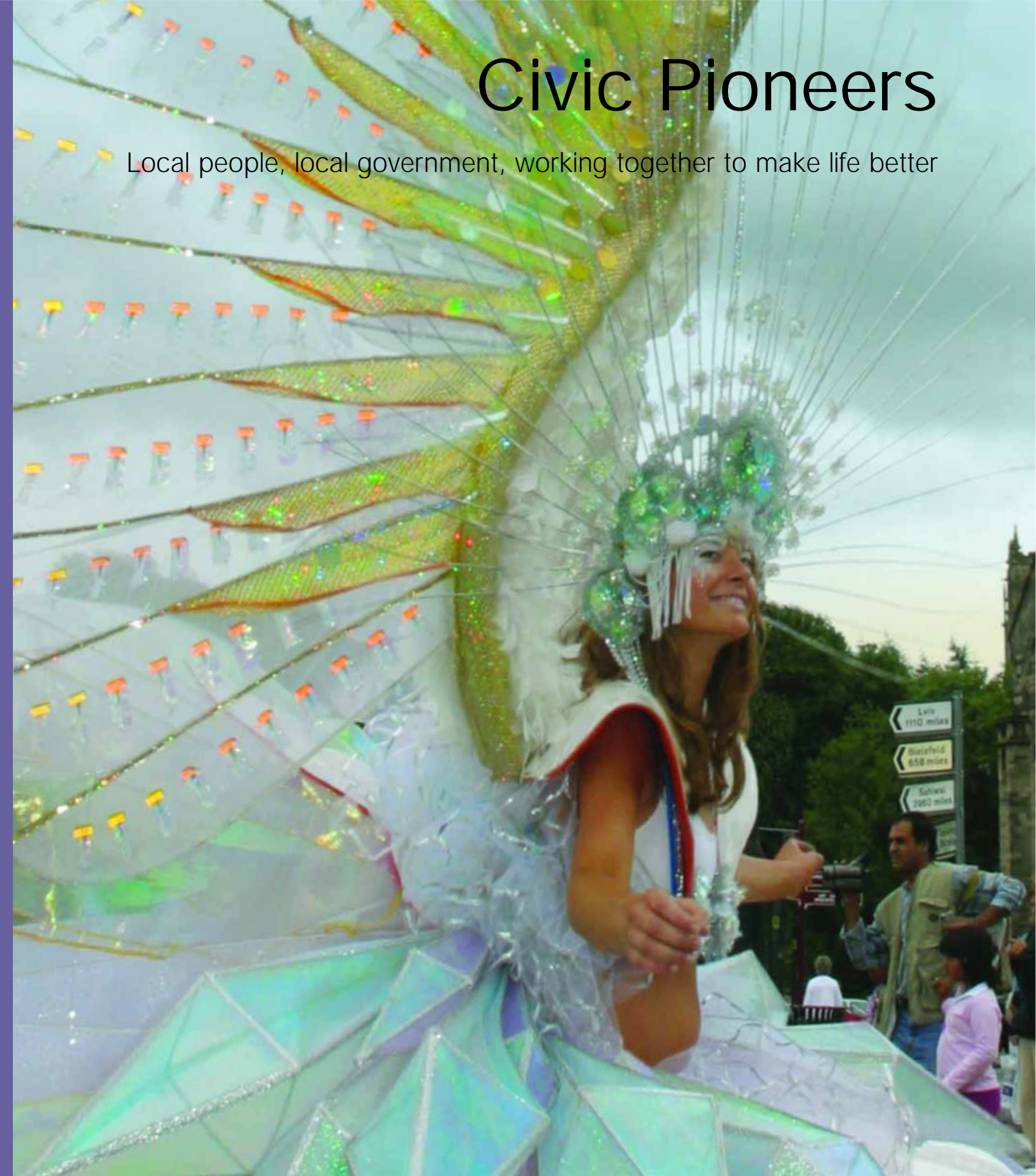


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Civic Pioneers

Local people, local government, working together to make life better



Civic pioneers helpline 020 7035 5129

By Maire Gaffney
A report by the Civil Renewal Unit

Contents

Civic Pioneers **Local people, local government, working together to make life better**

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The Civil Renewal Unit is part of the Home Office's Communities Group. It is leading the development of the Government's Together We Can action plan, which promotes ways for people to work with government to improve quality of life in communities.

Civic Pioneers are local authorities who have signed up to working with each other to try out ways of working with local communities and to share their experiences of what works best.

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This document is available in alternative formats on request.

Front cover image A Carnival of Culture brings diverse communities together in Rochdale.

Foreword	5
Background to the report	6
Executive Summary	7
Birmingham	11
Castle Vale Housing Action Trust	15
Balsall Heath Forum	17
Northfield District	18
Ipswich	19
South East Ipswich Community Reassurance Team	22
Community Forums	23
MAD – Making A Difference in Ipswich	24
Manchester	25
The Community Engagement Strategy and Area Co-ordination	29
New East Manchester Beacons Programme	31
Manchester Libraries Community Services Team	33
Tenant Participation Unit	35
Newcastle	37
Urban Design Team – Byker Design Competition	40
Newcastle New Deal for Communities	42
North Benwell Neighbourhood Management Initiative	44
Have a Gay Say Day	46
Newham	47
Member Development Programme – Influential councillor scheme	49
Community Participation and Engagement Unit	51
Plymouth	53
Morice Town Home Zone	56
East End Partnership	58
Tenant Involvement Project	60
Rochdale	61
Rochdale Town Teams and Area Forums	63
Youth Inclusion Project	65
Junior Neighbourhood Wardens	67
Operation Street Sports	68
Sheffield	69
The Primary Regeneration Project Children and Family Services Consultation	72
The Raising Attainment Project	74
Southey and Owlerton Area Regeneration (SOAR)	75
Civic Pioneer contacts	77

Foreword

The local authorities who have contributed to this report are Civic Pioneers, dedicated to sharing and learning from their successful examples of working with communities and involving local people. This report, carried out on behalf of the network by the Community Development Foundation, presents real live examples of local communities and public bodies working together to tackle local issues.

These examples teach us some challenging lessons. They demonstrate the value of innovation and new ways of thinking and working together. The message is clear: Government – whether local or national – can't solve everything, and nor can communities. It's better when we work together.

The Civic Pioneers network is important to our understanding of what makes effective community engagement because local authorities play such a key role in enabling local people to take part in decision-making. As the examples in this report show, local authorities really can make a difference by working in a way that enables people to get involved. This is essential if we are to achieve long term sustainable solutions for local people.

Civic Pioneers have in common a commitment to develop the skills and provide training for local people and community groups, particularly those that are at greatest risk of social exclusion. Their membership of the network signals a commitment from the public sector to involve local people in the development of policies and practices, particularly those that will have a day to day impact on their lives.

As a result of their willingness to better understand and, potentially, change the way they work with communities, more citizens are able to take responsibility and play their crucial role in resolving local issues.

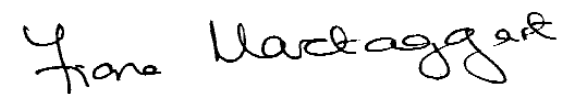
It was important that this report was written by and for the Civic Pioneers themselves, rather than coming from Government. Birmingham, Rochdale, Newcastle, Ipswich, Sheffield, Plymouth, Manchester and Newham have contributed case studies and together they tell a fascinating story about local people becoming actively involved in the design and delivery of public services.

There are many more where these came from and you'll find further case studies at www.active-citizen.org.uk.

During 2005 the Home Office will be working with other government departments to develop our shared Together We Can action plan – showing how the involvement of communities in shaping public policy is taking route across national as well as local government.

This report offers some of the best examples and we shall see many more coming through the network and others as our understanding of what works best when we work together grows.

Fiona Mactaggart, MP



Minister for Community
Policy, Race Equality and
Civil Renewal

Background

This report was commissioned by the Home Office in September 2004 at the start of the Civic Pioneer programme. The project has been managed and delivered by the Community Development Foundation.

The Civic Pioneer concept was developed by the Home Office Civil Renewal Unit with the Local Government Association and the Society for Local Authority Chief Executives. Civic Pioneers sign a memorandum of commitment to involve and engage local people in decision making processes on policy and implementation in public services.

Civil renewal is at the heart of the Home Office's vision for a better quality of life in local communities. It is seen as a way of achieving sustainable change and as dependent on people becoming actively engaged in the problems of their communities in a true partnership with public services. As such it has far reaching implications for the structure, ethos and methods of public services. The goal is to revitalise community life and build strong, empowered and active communities.

Community engagement can cover a variety of tools and approaches that public bodies use to empower citizens. This

report describes the nature and impact of effective community engagement from the first confirmed Pioneers. The first eight Pioneers were visited and information gathered on past and present initiatives they have supported or delivered. The case studies written from this information were chosen to illustrate areas of work in which Pioneers tend to be strong across the board and areas where individual Councils have created a particular and unusual approach.

The case studies are not intended as a reflection of the entire range or depth of work going on in each authority, but they provide a snapshot of community engagement work in Civic Pioneer authorities. There are many more where these came from, and in this report we present some of the most typical examples.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Civil renewal is at the heart of the Home Office's vision for a better quality of life in local communities. It is seen as a way of achieving sustainable change and as dependent on people becoming actively engaged in the problems of their communities in a true partnership with public services. Civic Pioneers are expected to show a commitment to involve and engage local people in decision making processes on policy and implementation in public services.

The concept of effective community engagement and involvement is such a far reaching and fundamental concept that it requires commitment, understanding and investment in skills across the Councils who wish to be Pioneers. This report with the Pioneers has found that to be successful with empowerment and engagement, change is involved at all levels from the strategic to the front line staff.

Even at an early stage of the Civic Pioneer programme, intentions to use it as a catalyst and tool for change are seen across authorities. Though there are no resources attached, they understand the value of having a mechanism for tying

together the different initiatives and approaches that have evolved and are operating at all levels in local authorities. For these authorities it is an antidote to the complexity that has arisen within councils and across partnership structures, providing a unifying principle.

Engagement strategy and leadership

A critical element in the impact of engagement is the strategic leadership of the Mayor and Leader of the Council and the operational leadership of the Chief Executive. This ensures the concept can cross boundaries and has the appropriate priority, resources and skills applied to it.

This kind of leadership has enabled staff from the Directors and Heads of Service to the front line to adopt a different approach to their work and learn new skills. The understanding, skills and enthusiasm of staff from all levels is critical to the success of engagement, which is often taking place in the face of considerable doubt and mistrust in local communities.

The holistic approach is also important because of the wide range of partnerships

Councils are engaged in. Many of these are driven by central government policy and have different emphases and outcomes. Many also have engagement and involvement as key elements. Turning engagement from an outcome into a fundamental approach in these partnerships is challenging for Local Authorities when they are dealing with external service structures that do not have democratic elections at their core.

Some have chosen to embed engagement and involvement in their local plan as well as in their community strategies, echoing the commitment of leadership to making this a fundamental theme. Some have taken a more radical strategic approach, such as Plymouth, rewriting the underlying structures of the Council to encompass more clearly the values and practice of community empowerment. Some, such as Newcastle, have woven community development teams into the strategic heart of their work.

These moves are creating the foundation for more effective community empowerment. The awareness of the connection between them and a new ability to communicate, understand and deliver more effective engagement is growing.

The evolution of area and ward representation structures has been going on for some time in the Pioneers. Some, such as Rochdale, have more than a decade of experience of these structures. Area and ward forums, however, are being redeveloped into a second or third generation of structures. This work is based on perceptions of the failure or weakness of previous structures in engaging as many or as diverse a representation as possible, or on perceptions that they could deliver more engagement with more resources.

Some of the older ward and area structures were tasked with engagement, but did not have any direct community involvement, dedicated resources or devolved powers. Area forums are now having extra powers and budgets devolved to them. However an emphasis on devolution of power can run up against the boundaries of other services and is limited by the enthusiasm of partners.

In some cases, such as Manchester and Newcastle, overarching strategic structures are being developed to tie the work of ward and area forums together and to co-ordinate and communicate better with other partners. Others are moving down the scale, like Rochdale and Plymouth, carving out smaller areas on traditional community lines and creating representative structures that can reach down to individual streets.

The potential has been identified for the ethos of empowerment and the practice of engagement in the first or second generation community structures, such as the area forums and ward forums, to come into conflict with traditional democratic structures and the role of elected members. This has been underlined in some places by the change to the cabinet system, where elected members themselves could be disempowered and disengaged without some development of their role.

Parallel structures where members are outside the loop and integrated structures where they are inside or controlling the loop both exist and make a unifying principle and strategy all the more important. Pioneers have tackled this issue by resourcing the development of Council Members and creating networks, training and co-ordination for them to carry out their role of representing and involving the community effectively. Newham is the furthest down this route.

Experience has shown Pioneers the possible pitfalls of assuming that the most obvious or vocal community representatives are the best channel for engagement. For many this has placed an emphasis on alternative strands of empowerment work, more informal and unstructured, and on more determined, detailed and innovative processes using tools as different as video

diaries, as in the Sheffield Children and Families Consultation and street representatives, as in The East End of Plymouth and the Balsall Heath Forum in Birmingham.

Commitment to the principle of involvement is a key element in carrying out the long term in-depth work that Pioneers recognise is essential to changing the ingrained attitudes both to and of service providers. Many Pioneers have adopted innovative projects or innovative approaches to engaging people in changing their circumstances or how services react to them. Often this is issue based. Projects based on crime, the environment and sport seem to be frequently adopted as effective ways to galvanise local people, such as in Rochdale. Youth projects also figure strongly in the work of many Pioneers.

Pioneers have recognised that with a clear strategic view of the ethos and goals almost any piece of work can be a vehicle for delivering results in terms of engagement and empowerment; even street cleaning as in the Ipswich Making a Difference programme, traffic calming as in the Morice Town Home Zone in Plymouth or libraries, as in Manchester.

Delivery is tied to effective community development work and three key elements of that are evolving in the Pioneers. One is to site Council employees who are skilled community development workers directly in communities; another is to create community development skills in all Council workers, and the third is to take community development workers from the distinct Council departments they have been working in and create a specialised and skilled central unit that crosses departmental boundaries. All three elements working together produces a strong platform for creating impact.

There is a wide variation in approaches to measuring impact and it was difficult for the Pioneers to think about outcomes and how to evidence them. There is clearly a need to concentrate on this area. Those with the most evolved and creative approaches have had centrally funded development and regeneration programmes with substantial and long running resources to dedicate to measuring and evaluating their work.

Pioneers are also adopting a highly strategic internal approach to community engagement performance measures, however, and are aiming to negotiate Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) performance indicators, creating an important financial incentive and recognition.

Case study highlights

Areas where Pioneers tend to be strong in engagement are regeneration and housing, New Deal, youth initiatives, area working and crime and safety. More unusual examples of effective engagement and empowerment work are seen in urban planning, street level representation in Birmingham and Plymouth, youth diversion in Rochdale and lesbian, gay and bisexual engagement in Newcastle.

In housing initiatives the work of the Castle Vale Housing Action Trust in Birmingham is particularly interesting for the impact it has achieved and its legacy to the area. The impact on health, attitudes, liveability (or quality of life), house values and crime are impressive in their depth and range. The Trust provides a valuable model of what can be achieved in one of the most difficult areas.

In youth engagement the work of Rochdale is particularly impressive. The impact on anti-social behaviour has been strong and their initiative to involve young offenders in diverting others from crime is a fresh and creative approach to a widespread problem.

The Urban Planning Unit in Newcastle is completely committed to the concept of empowerment and has built in development processes to its regeneration initiative in the Byker area, using a range of tools to ensure the

engagement of people who would otherwise have been excluded from a highly technical and complex process.

The East End Partnership in Plymouth and the Balsall Heath Forum in Birmingham are both interesting examples of the way street representatives and face to face community work can impact on crime and community safety. The drop in crime and anti-social behaviour in both areas is impressive.

The Making a Difference in Ipswich initiative is an example of the ways that very practical and time limited activities such as street cleaning and environmental improvements, when carried out with clear empowerment and involvement goals can make changes that people appreciate and respond to rather than observe.

There are many examples of training of local people to enable them to take part in local structures and services. However there are two particular examples in Manchester and Newcastle that create a different approach to spreading engagement and empowerment skills. The New East Manchester Beacons Programme and the West End New Deal Programme in Newcastle both have training initiatives that employ people from the community and give them accredited training on the job in community development.

Traffic calming is an initiative carried out by Councils all over the country. The Morice Town Home Zone in Plymouth demonstrates how a commitment to engaging and empowering the community when carrying out such an initiative can create impacts far beyond the reductions in traffic. This commitment took time and effort by Council officers, but produced outcomes that revitalised a polarised community afflicted by crime and a poor quality of life.

Neighbourhood Management is an initiative that has been prevalent across the country. A strong example of how this can be a catalyst for positive change in areas where physical regeneration has failed is in North Benwell in Newcastle, where an investment in social issues by three partners, the Council, Northumbrian Police and a local Housing Association, have made an impact. The focus provided by a small, strong local management team is a key element in its impact.

The use of community engagement as a tool for turning around initiatives that have been struggling is an interesting aspect of a number of the case studies, but particularly SOAR in Sheffield and the Morice Town Home Zone in Plymouth. Both faced alienated and suspicious communities, amended their approaches early in their projects, created deeper and more effective empowerment processes and achieved impacts that would not otherwise have been impossible.

Birmingham



Balsall Heath Forum: a major turnaround

Birmingham

Background

Birmingham, in the heart of the West Midlands, is generally considered to be England's 'second city' due to its size and cultural diversity. The 2001 census ranks Birmingham as the second most populous city in England with a population of 977,087. Birmingham was established as a two tier district council in 1974 with the national re-organisation of local government. On 1 July 1986, however, the council was reorganised and is now a unitary authority. Birmingham City Council covers a total of 103.4 square miles (26,777 hectares) of land.

Economically Birmingham is a diverse area and includes some of the most socio-economically deprived wards in the country as well as areas of relative affluence. Once a predominantly manufacturing based economy Birmingham has seen a gradual change over the last decade to becoming a service based economy, with over 78% of employment in services¹.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004 (IMD 2004), rank Birmingham as the fifteenth most deprived local authority in England². The city suffers from a combination of a high unemployment rate at 5.7% (the national average for England and Wales is 3.4%), poor housing and poverty.

Demographically, Birmingham is an interesting city. 48% of the population is male and 52% are female and the average age of a person living in Birmingham is 36. It is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the UK; 70.4% of the population is White British, 6% Pakistani, 5.7% from Indian backgrounds, 4.9% are Afro Caribbean, 3.2% are White Irish and 2.1% Bangladeshi. 1.2% come from Chinese or other ethnic backgrounds. The majority of people living in Birmingham describe their religion as Christian (59.1%) although there is a large population of Muslims at 14.3%. 12.4% say they are of no religion³.

Strategic framework

The Council's Corporate Plan emphasises community engagement and has a strong engagement process built into it. The community strategy is currently being reviewed with a view to incorporating devolution and civil renewal objectives. This strategy is seen as resting on the new district structures, including district strategic partnerships: more local versions of LSPs, which will provide channels for embedding engagement across neighbourhoods and new local services.

¹ Birmingham and Solihull Economic Review 2003/4 <http://www.birminghameconomy.org.uk/sum/ecrev03sum.htm>

² These indices are seven domains of deprivation: Income deprivation, Employment deprivation, Health deprivation and disability, Education, skills and training deprivation, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living environment deprivation and Crime. Each of these domains is measured separately and then results are combined to give an overview at two levels on of which is the local authority level.

³ All demographic data comes from the Census statistics 2001 at: <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/>

Devolution and localisation are part of the 'Flourishing Neighbourhoods' or 'Vibrant Urban Villages' objective, one of two core objectives in the cabinet and corporate plan. A review of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is underway and will have more of a focus on neighbourhood management and civil renewal.

Future plans

As the largest unitary authority in the country and a richly diverse city of a million people, Birmingham provides a wealth of examples of the successes and challenges of civil renewal. A Council with a cross-party commitment to civil renewal and 'vibrant urban villages' has a long history of innovation in community engagement and has now implemented a radical reform of its political and management structures to provide a framework for further progress. The Council sees its civic pioneer status both as a way of focusing the further development of local policies and as a means to inform Government policy on civil and neighbourhood renewal and local democracy.

Birmingham's new district structure brings together political accountability, service management and budgets at a local level, supported by more integrated teams of local staff and District Strategic Partnerships. This provides a framework for local innovation and a focus on the more local neighbourhoods in which active citizenship, stronger communities and partnerships can take root. Districts are being encouraged to take a lead on taking forward the aims of civil renewal – this is a learning and evolving approach – not a central blueprint.



Creating a sensory garden in Castle Vale

Birmingham's two neighbourhood management pilots – Castle Vale HAT and Balsall Heath Forum – are now part of the Home Office funded 'guide neighbourhoods' initiative to enable successful neighbourhoods to support others across the country. The city also has:

- about 80 diverse neighbourhood forums, supported by the Birmingham Association of Neighbourhood Forums which works with the Community Empowerment Network to provide training and capacity building
- the Academy of Youth – University of the First Age, Young People's Parliament and College for International Citizenship
- long established voluntary organisations such as Birmingham Settlement and an active, nationally recognised Voluntary Services Council, and organisations which reflect the diversity of the city, for example Birmingham Partnership for Change which works with young people from the African-Caribbean community and Bangladeshi Youth Forum
- a strong higher education sector with expertise in citizenship, local governance and regeneration
- a project called Better Together which is funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Business in the Community and which encourages contributions to community projects by companies investing in the city.

A steering group and a wider network of statutory agencies, voluntary and community organisations and academics is being established to drive forward the city's approach to civil renewal. This will be linked closely to the Birmingham Strategic Partnership (Birmingham's LSP) and the city's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. It will also seek to link together, at a local level, the wide range of government initiatives impacting on community and voluntary organisations and the city's own Voluntary Sector Compact.

Case studies

Castle Vale Housing Action Trust

Background and aims

Castle Vale was one of Birmingham's largest post war high rise estates, built to take the families displaced from the clearance of the inner city and quickly suffering from a variety of economic and social problems. By the late 1980s it was an area with a very poor reputation thanks to high crime rates, poor health, high unemployment, poor education, poor housing, poor environment and a lack of local facilities.

At the time legislation created the option of Housing Action Trusts, which were quangos set up to tackle poor housing conditions. They also recognised that the social issues that went along with poor housing could not be ignored. Discussions took place between residents, the council and the government and these led in 1993 to the founding of the Castle Vale Housing Action Trust (HAT).

From the beginning it adopted a holistic and inclusive agenda and saw the issues of anti-social behaviour, unemployment and health as key to achieving a comprehensive solution to the problems of the area. Improvements in all these areas, along with

housing, were objectives along the way to creating a sustainable community. The Trust learnt early on that involving and empowering the residents had to be a key part of the vision, and placing the community and community issues at the centre of its work meant that Castle Vale was a pioneer of the current community-led approach to regeneration.

What has it done?

The Trust began with a 'planning for real' process that didn't really engage residents or create a consensus. The process was restarted and they set up project action groups before each project was designed to involve residents in every step in the process. There were also regular meetings with residents to talk about anything that might slip through the project groups. As part of this empowerment process residents were trained in how to deal with neighbours, sit on boards, negotiate, persuade and make decisions.

The Trust helped residents to set up a democratically elected community group that is at the centre of strategic issues. Residents sit on the Trust board and on all sub-groups, working groups

and committees. They are in the majority on the Operations and Finance Committee. All meetings are open to the residents and there are monthly consultative meetings between the Trust's Directors and the tenants and residents group. The Trust has also set up a Neighbourhood Management Board with elected residents.

The Trust has supported ideas from the community such as a local radio station, a credit union and resident compensation packages. The radio station keeps residents informed, promotes local issues and creates a positive image for the area.

The trust worked in partnership with the Police to set up the Valewatch Partnership. This deals with persistent offenders and employs two police officers. It holds regular meetings and information exchanges between the Trust, schools, the police and residents. It also introduces community safety initiatives such as an alcohol exclusion zone. As a result of this partnership and of sector policing people now feel confident enough to report problems to the Police and to act as witnesses.

The Trust worked with the Police and Youth Services to set up a Youth Inclusion Support Panel. The Panel employs two outreach youth workers paid for by the police. It supports young people who have started to act anti-socially, changing their behaviour through family support and diverting them into positive activities. It has also helped young people to develop communication and leadership skills by participating in community arts events.

A Health Village has been developed in partnership with the Primary Care Trust, with modern facilities and services such as minor operations and children's mental health care. The village hosts 11 voluntary organisations. The multi-agency approach has also been applied to the development of an early years drugs education programme.

The Trust's staff are completely committed to the area and most live locally. The leadership of the Trust has always held a passionate belief in empowerment and this has been communicated to the staff who regard the Trust as innovative, positive and caring. This attitude has been translated into a drive to ensure the sustainability of the work once the Trust reaches the end of its life next year. An endowment trust fund, a Neighbourhood Manager and a variety of organisations have been established to carry on the work, all with residents tied into their structures. Residents have also formed a scrutiny panel that will meet with the Neighbourhood Management Board and other service providers to discuss local services and set standards.

The Trust considers that community involvement, clear vision, strong leadership, holistic regeneration and quick wins for the community have all been key to its success.

Outcomes

- Unemployment was 8% above the city average and is now 3% below it
- Life expectancy rates were seven years below the West Midlands average and are now average for infants and adults
- Castle Vale was one of only two areas of Birmingham where residents' fear of crime dropped from 1999-2002
- Applications for housing from outside the area have almost doubled in the past two years. There is now a waiting list of 1,600
- Rates of GCSE passes more than doubled from 1995-2003
- Crime has reduced by 36% from 2000-2003
- School enrolment went from 300 to more than 900
- Service providers have been motivated and inspired by contact with residents to change and improve services.

Balsall Heath Forum

Background and aims

Balsall Heath was an area with a cohesive working class community living in traditional terraced houses, which was broken up due to redevelopment. Economic change, development and immigration gradually replaced the traditional community with communities that were fragmented and less assertive. This allowed a red light district to expand and become a major problem for the area. Schools in the area were also poor, the environment was poor and there were problems with anti-social behaviour. Some local activists with a Trade Union background came together with the local church leaders and decided that they would take some action to decide if the area could be saved and young people given more positive role models than those offered by the area's prostitution.

The Forum began with a small group that set up a day nursery and a school. The success of these inspired the

setting up of the Building a Better Balsall Heath Campaign. This was aimed at improving the area more generally, increasing the aspirations of the community, widening the participation of residents and giving them the confidence to self-govern. The campaign led to the setting up of the Forum. The principles and training of the Trade Union participants were particularly important in emphasising the need for mutual support, self reliance and organisation in the setting up of these initiatives.

What has it done?

The Forum structure has established a street steward for each street in the area. These spread information and welcome new residents into the area, helping them to settle in and find out about services. They are regarded as more positive local role models and also organize 22 residents groups. Through their local knowledge they can identify important local issues; they know the local beat officers and can tackle problems immediately.

The Forum co-ordinates the stewards, the 22 residents groups and service providers. The residents groups are autonomous but come together on issues such as safety. The Forum is like a commonwealth; common issues are distilled into the overarching Forum structure.

The Forum contributes to the strategy of other agencies through a Neighbourhood Strategy Partnership, chaired by the Forum and attended by statutory services. This employs a Neighbourhood Manager and neighbourhood development plans emerge from this partnership. These are the forward plans for the year, providing a focus for action.

The Forum also employs neighbourhood wardens and runs a range of services including day care for older people, a nursery and environmental services. The Forum wants to work to spread their model in Birmingham and beyond, building the capacity of statutory sector managers outside their area to engage with communities.

Outcomes

- Balsall Heath and Castle Vale are the only two areas in Birmingham where fear of crime is not rising
- Housing in the area was valueless, and is now seeing the fastest price rises in the city
- The community has recognised the need to act responsibly and that it can solve problems that statutory authorities cannot
- Local police considered Balsall Heath to be at risk of major disorder and one of the two worst areas in the city. The Chief Constable now sees the area as a major turnaround.

Northfield District

Background and aims

Ward committees were created in the mid 1990s in Birmingham in order to make local government more accountable and responsible to communities. Ward committees are run by the three ward councillors and hold open meetings.

The council established Ward Advisory Boards, which are ward-based strategic partnerships consisting of councillors and representatives of community groups. The ward structures have been central to the delivery of NRF strategic priorities.

Since wards were large and contained 3-4 neighbourhoods each, the council also encouraged the setting up of neighbourhood forums. These have grown in numbers through the 90s and are now supported by the Birmingham Association of Neighbourhood Forums.

At this time Northfield also came to include an urban parish council moved from a neighbouring rural district, with elected representatives, providing a powerful voice and a potential model for future development.

In 2000 Birmingham set up a Democracy Commission to

make recommendations on how to implement the Local Government Act. The Commission came to the view that Birmingham was too big to deliver services and local government through a centralized council structure, and that people felt remote from the council. The decision was made to devolve services to district committees to make them more local. The city then held a constitutional convention to create a radical framework for devolution which became known as the 'Going Local' initiative.

The vision currently is one of vibrant neighbourhoods and urban villages with mixed tenures and communities that have local control over budgets and services.

What has it done?

Each District now covers three or four wards and budgets and services have been devolved since April 2004. This means that libraries, leisure centres and neighbourhood offices are managed by the District Director and the devolution of housing is being piloted through community based housing organisations.

The emphasis of this development is to integrate improvements in the delivery

of service and improvements to governance, linking them more directly to communities. There are three Neighbourhood Forums in Northfield which are open access and are responsible for capacity building and community learning. The Northfields district has set up a select committee with community and voluntary sector representatives to look at how the district structures will work at neighbourhood and ward level. They will produce a framework for community engagement, partnership working and decision making. This has the aim of cutting down on overlaps and reconciling the different layers from ward level, where there is space to play out the issues that are more particular, to city level where the more strategic concerns dominate.

The work on governance and community involvement is being matched by a commission for young people, looking at the provision of services to them and at the issues which concern them, such as anti-social behaviour.

The neighbourhood office has a team to support councillors to fulfill their leadership and partnership roles across the community, voluntary and public sector.

Outcomes

The reorganisation is still less than a year old and has not yet had time to produce outcomes. A review of the Going Local initiative will take place in mid-2005. There is however some early evidence of improved satisfaction with the services that have been localized.

Ipswich



Making a difference with the community: new safety railings for Castle Hill infants school

Ipswich

Background

Ipswich Borough Council is in the south east of Suffolk. Suffolk is a largely agricultural county with around 50 miles of scenic North Sea coast. It is bordered by the counties of Norfolk to the north, Cambridgeshire to the west, and Essex to the south-east. Ipswich is a two tiered local authority with parish and town councils. It gained its status as a Borough Council as a title of honor conferred by Royal Charter 800 years ago. The resident population of Ipswich, as measured in the 2001 Census, is 117,069. The local authority area covers 15.37 square miles (3,981 hectares) of land.

Today, the East of England region has one of the fastest-growing economies in the UK and Ipswich city is one of the major commercial hubs in the region. Ipswich is a relatively prosperous area, although it does contain some pockets of deprivation. The IMD 2004 ranks Ipswich as the 98th most deprived local authority in England. 63.2% of the population of Ipswich is employed, yet Ipswich suffers a marginally higher unemployment rate compared to the rest of England and Wales at 3.5%. In Ipswich town ward itself, however, this figure shoots up to 12.102%.⁴

Demographically, Ipswich is a typical example of a rural British town: 49% of the population is male and 51% is female. The average age of a person living in Ipswich is 38. 93.4% of the population is White British. Black and minority ethnic groups only make up close to 5% of the population. Of this, 1.8% are from Asian/Asian British backgrounds, 1.8% Black/Black British backgrounds, 0.6% White Irish, and 0.6% from Chinese or other ethnic backgrounds. As for religion, 68.1% of people living in Ipswich describe themselves as of Christian faith, 20.3% state they are of no religion and only 1.2% described themselves as of Muslim faith.

Strategic framework

Ipswich has had a commitment to the principles of community involvement and empowerment over many years and has been involved in the development of civil renewal policy nationally.

Future plans

The Borough Council is intending to strengthen its Community Forums by encouraging further representation from local residents. The Community Development Workers and Liveability Officers allocated to each Forum area will continue to make links with more residents.

The Council will build on work with the Police and use the Forum structure to facilitate further engagement as their input was greatly appreciated by the residents present at the Forum meetings.

⁴ <http://www.suffolkcc.gov.uk/policy/suffolkprofile/iworkdep.pdf> The state of Suffolk 2000

The success of the South East Community Reassurance Team, where the Borough Council has linked up with the Police into a cohesive unit will be further improved upon with the idea of rolling this out into other communities as and when funding becomes available.

The work of the Partnership Priority Area, where the Borough Council and other agencies are working alongside the Police staff in a joint facility in the Old Stoke Area of the town, will be developed during the next year.



The Probation Service worked with the community to improve Yarmouth Bridge Road. Here it is before ...



... and after

Case studies

South East Ipswich Community Reassurance Team

Background and aims

This was an area experiencing problems with crime, low educational achievement, poor health and high rates of teenage pregnancy. The local school went into special measures and there were problems with transport due to buses being stoned. Communities were very territorial and people were unwilling to mix with other communities. There was a long history of anti-council and anti-police attitudes and families with generations of experience of criminality. The statutory agencies felt that money was going into the infrastructure of the area, but not in the ways that the residents wanted and the area was slipping out of control. In a survey of community priorities the South East Forum area gave community safety and increasing police presence as a main priority.

The aim of the Reassurance Team was to create a better response to community concerns, create a safer environment, reassure people that services were responding to them and make the area a safer place to live.

What has it done?

The South East Ipswich Community Reassurance Team was formed in April 2004. To create the team, three additional Community Police Officers were supplemented with three police officers and three Community Support Officers. Premises were established within a local community centre in office space which was designed to be shared with frontline Ipswich Borough Council staff.

The idea of the Reassurance Team was that it would be a joint team of police officers, Community Support Officers and council staff and that

through a joint tasking process it would work in collaboration with a wide range of other service providers to reduce levels of crime and disorder within East Ipswich.

This team includes community caretakers and a Liveability Officer from the council. The council has further supported the initiative with a hotline for reporting problems with a swift response. As a result there has been an increase in the reporting of a range of problems and a resulting improvement in the local environment.

In September 2004, to support the work of the Team, two shopping precincts falling within the area were designated as dispersal zones and this has had a considerable impact on disorder. In excess of 130 dispersal orders have been given and nine people arrested for breach of the order.

Community forums

Background and aims

The council has been developing area forums for the past year and decided to make them the responsibility of a manager who would also oversee Councillor Services. This had the aim of bringing together the council's committee system and community development initiatives. Previously there was a tension between the position of councillors as democratically elected local representatives and the structures intended to develop the capacity of the community to represent itself and direct services. Co-ordinating and developing the two simultaneously under one head of service was regarded as the best way to ensure that councillors and community structures complemented each other.

The forums were intended to bring together service providers and to tackle large issues, such as health, in a holistic way that could involve the full range of direct and indirect causes such as housing, feeling

unsafe and being unable to adopt healthy behaviour such as exercise.

What have they done?

Five forum areas have been identified with three to four wards in each forum. There are three community development workers appointed to support these forums. Senior council officers are appointed to attend each area forum and they generally chair the meetings. These officers work at a level where they can get action from the council in an authoritative but acceptable way. Each has different roles and skills in the council. This has been critical for the confidence of local people in the council's intention to respond.

The forums are open access meetings attended by service providers, councillors and local people. The meetings take place in community venues and are publicised by local people as well as by the council. Venues such as schools have distributed

forum information with their pupils and pulled in people who would not otherwise have attended.

They have identified that the size of the area covered could distance people from the process, so they have created a format where the forums start with one large group where overall issues can be introduced and dealt with strategically, followed by smaller ward based groups that deal with detail and have reports back from services on detailed responses.

Forums have evolved to the point where services such as the Police consult through them down to ward level. They have hosted a liveability initiative that has allowed people to say what they wanted from their area and why. Informal feedback indicates that this consultation involved local people to the extent that they were unwilling to take breaks from the activities.

Outcomes

- Comparing the 2004/05 position with that of 2003/04, there has been a reduction of vehicle crime by 27% and burglary of people's homes by 26.4%
- A local consultation exercise completed in July 2004 showed that 62% stated that they had noticed a more visible presence in the last three months and 50% stated they would recognise and know the name of a local officer responsible for their area
- One shopkeeper has reported to the Team a reduction of 70% in losses due to theft and an increase in takings of £200 a day
- Residents are reporting improvements in the attitudes of young people.

Outcomes

The Forums are still at an early stage of development and do not yet have specific impact information. There are plans to evaluate their impact during the next financial year.

- Residents are asking what the community needs to do rather than expecting agencies to be the only source of change
- Services are adopting a more local, detailed and community focused way of viewing planning, delivery and reporting
- Councillors are involved in the community at ward level and have a more relaxed and positive relationship with the forums and with the community.

MAD – Making A Difference in Ipswich

Background and aims

The Council was keen to find ways to achieve immediate improvements and visible impacts in local areas while also creating a way to identify longer term issues in the community and develop an action plan to deal with them. The initiative was proposed in 2003 and a trial project carried out in December 2003 and January 2004. The initiative was part of the council's approach to the Liveability Programme and also matched the objectives of community safety to reduce the fear of crime and improve quality of life for residents.

What has it done?

The council's Liveability Project Officers surveyed an area on foot to identify things that needed to be tackled and talk to local

people. They delivered a leaflet to every household to let them know the initiative would be in their area and to ask for their suggestions for improvements.

When residents had a chance to respond, a plan was created to tackle the problems. This identified issues that could be dealt with immediately by services, issues that a team could deal with on a one day visit, issues requiring capital investment and the long term issues that required changes to policy or practice.

A multi-functional team was formed and trained to carry out a variety of activities and to co-ordinate with other services. The team visited the area, street by street to deal with the problems and issues identified and this team worked with the Police, the Environment Agency and the Fire Service.

Outcomes

- On the first day the team
 - Removed two 17.5 tonne trucks of rubbish
 - Removed 98 redundant road signs and posts
 - Repaired footpaths and made trees and hedges safe
 - Replaced 11 faded street signs
 - Removed graffiti in 11 locations
 - Distributed 500 bulbs for residents to plant in open spaces
- A customer survey showed that 69% of residents felt the council had made a difference and 91% wanted the trial to be repeated
- The scheme has been rolled out across the borough.

Manchester



Manchester – valuing community engagement

Manchester

Background

Manchester is the regional capital of the north west of England and the UK's largest economic region outside London. The resident population of Manchester, as measured in the 2001 Census, was 392,819. The City Council is a unitary authority and covers a total of 45 square miles (or 11,565 hectares of land).

Economically Manchester is the north west's regional centre for finance, commerce, retail, culture and leisure and is home to a major international airport. The City also has one of the largest student populations in Europe. Manchester is in the process of transforming itself from an industrial city dependent on manufacturing to a vibrant modern city and whilst manufacturing remains important, Manchester has attracted growth in the knowledge-based economy and is in the top ten of European cities for business location⁵.

Manchester also suffers from massive deprivation, however. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 ranks Manchester as the second most deprived local authority in England. The economic success of the city centre is in sharp contrast to surrounding communities which suffer from some of the highest concentrations of crime, poor health and poor housing. Only 46.4% of the population is employed (as compared to the national average of 60.4%), 5% of the population is unemployed and a high percentage are economically inactive, permanently disabled or suffering from long term illness.

Demographically in Manchester 49 per cent of the population is male and 51 per cent is female. The average age of a person living in Manchester is a few years younger than the national average at 35. 81% of the population is White British, with 5.9% from Pakistan, 3.8% White Irish, 2.3% Afro Caribbean, 1.7% African, 1.5% Indian and 0.9% Bangladeshi. 2.2% are from Chinese or other ethnic backgrounds⁶. 62.4% of the population describe themselves as being of Christian faith, 9.1% are Muslims and 16% are of no religion.

Strategic framework

The council has a Community Engagement Strategy and is clear about the value it gives to involving residents in services and about the primacy of local democracy. It has a strategic team with the task of embedding the goals of engagement and empowerment across all departments and partnerships.

To develop baseline community engagement data, two community engagement indicators have been built into the Council's LPSA2 work. This includes the percentage of people volunteering and the percentage of people who feel they can influence decision-making. The case studies in this report have provided the Council with an additional focus of stocktaking community engagement activity and analysing the impact of the work.

⁵ <http://www.manchester.gov.uk/corporate/thecity/>

⁶ <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/>

Future plans

Throughout the Council, there are a number of areas where many different types of community engagement are carried out. This includes:

- Ward Co-ordination, where engagement is targeted at each ward. Examples include youth panels, information stalls and community events
- Strategic Regeneration Frameworks, which cover regeneration areas. Examples include using arts as a tool for community engagement, capacity building initiatives and consultation on the frameworks themselves. This is extensive and shapes future development in those parts of the city
- Council Departments: examples include Participatory Appraisal, the Valuing Older People programme and the Manchester Young People's Council.

To develop baseline community engagement data, two community engagement indicators have been built into the Council's LPSA2 work. This includes the percentage of people volunteering and percentage of people who feel they can influence decision-making. Measuring community engagement can be hard and a number of initiatives are just starting. This case study work commissioned through the Home Office has however provided the Council with an additional focus for stocktaking community engagement activity and analysing the impact of the work.

In 2005, there are a number of processes starting to develop community engagement. The Manchester Community Engagement Strategy will be reviewed by April 2005. The Area Co-ordination Team will support this process. To coincide with this, and to meet commitments as a member of the Civic Pioneer network, the Departmental profiles of Community Engagement will be completed. This will clearly show the strengths and weaknesses of each Department. The review will be led by the Community Engagement Development Officer and supported through a network of Community Engagement Champions.

The network of Community Engagement Champions will be vital to developing initiatives to address weaknesses and also share good practice and opportunities for departments to work together. The network will also be a catalyst for embedding the reviewed MCES into Council approaches. Through the network, each department's consultation plans will be updated for April 2005. After this, each department will develop community engagement plans that will connect principles of engagement and actions in departments, with the reviewed MCES. There will be a focus on getting plans onto the Council internet to support co-ordination, seeing what is planned and sharing good practice.

Case studies

Work to support the development of inclusive community engagement will continue in Ward Co-ordination. The learning from this work will guide work with Departments. Support is being given to engagement initiatives resulting from the four community engagement workshops, which will be monitored and evaluated for their impacts. A 12-18 month training programme in community engagement skills for Support Officers and Ward Co-ordinators is also being developed.

The profiling work of community engagement activities will be repeated with partners of the LSP.

The overarching principle of this work is to connect strategic thinking with action, supported by capacity building for officers. There will be a focus on the full spectrum of community engagement (informing, researching, consulting, involving, devolving, supporting community action). This will be additional to representative democracy that is at the heart of community engagement in Manchester City Council.



Manchester is in the process of transforming itself

The Community Engagement Strategy and area co-ordination

Background and aims

In 2000 the city council established a system of ward co-ordination. This is based on a Ward Service Co-ordination group for each of the city's 33 wards plus one for the city centre. These hold quarterly meetings between the three ward councillors and service managers. The groups are supported by Ward Co-ordinators; council officers who, in addition to their normal job, act as champions for wards. They are helped by Support Officers seconded full time from different departments.

One of the tasks of the Ward Co-ordinators is to make sure that the priorities of local residents are known and that local communities are involved. Ward Co-ordinators and Support Officers are required to consult and engage and be able to demonstrate this. They are also tasked with joining up improvements to council services, involving councillors in service improvements in their wards and improving the accountability of the council to residents.

The Local Strategic Partnership recognised that in addition to ward level processes there was a lot of engagement work going on

in different agencies such as the police, Primary Care Trust and Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). There was a view that all statutory sector engagement should be brought into one process and aligned with the work in wards and in the voluntary and community sector. The potential tension between new frameworks for consultation and the role of councillors was recognised. The LSP produced a Community Engagement Strategy explaining the process, aims and ethos of engagement.

A multi-agency panel was set up to discuss ways of moving forward. This concluded that the concepts of local forums and of devolution of services were not effective or conducive to Best Value. The way forward was seen as securing change in the mainstream to focus whole departments on the needs and interests of local areas. This was best facilitated by officers with a strategic co-ordination role, supported fully in this role, and by a small strategic action team.

What has it done?

A small action team was created in January 2004 to support ward co-ordination and the delivery of the

community engagement strategy, to develop connections between the Local Strategic Partnership, thematic partnerships, elected representatives and area based structures, and to identify best practice and training and skills needs. The council has created a dedicated post of Community Engagement Development Officer in the team.

Mapping of the current level of engagement was carried out and an action plan created on how to engage hard to reach groups. From this work a network was developed of people across the council who were skilled in community engagement. A toolkit on community engagement has been created and a guide to area working compiled to spread good practice and establish minimum standards in engagement. The toolkit describes the principles, methods and tools of engagement, how to target specific groups, and the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. The guide to area working sets out six levels of community engagement. Levels 1-3 are the more traditional forms of community engagement, such as researching needs and priorities, while levels 4-6 are less traditional, such as devolving decision making

power. Levels 4-6 tend to be carried out on a project basis in Manchester's regeneration areas, which have the resources to fund community media, arts and environment projects that can develop confidence.

Four community engagement workshops have been carried out as a trial with Ward Co-ordination services to develop community engagement skills. These have delivered training on the philosophy and processes of engagement. They were targeted at wards that had not benefited from regeneration initiatives and had less well developed structures. They concentrated on increasing knowledge of the less traditional methods of community involvement and generated ideas for projects which participants have been developing; for example a project based on the experience of older people of being in gangs in the 50s, relating this to the experience of young people of gangs today, with the aim of engaging both groups with each other and with project work.

The Team is supporting the learning process in local areas and helping to monitor and ground the process. It is developing an approach to engagement that will cross departments and be embedded in them. It is supporting the work of the Manchester Community Engagement Strategy Working Group, under the lead of the LSP, in negotiating with central government to evolve two community engagement indicators in the LPSA.

Outcomes

- The action team has been in place for less than a year and has not yet had time to create hard outcomes. The work does however have built-in evaluation methods and shows early indications that council officers are changing their approach
- There is increasing innovation in community engagement
- Areas without regeneration resources are piloting new methods of engagement.

New East Manchester Beacons programme

Background and aims

East Manchester is an area with high levels of unemployment, long term structural decline, high crime, poor health, poor facilities, poor housing and high levels of negative equity. 60% of employment in the area was lost from 1975 to 1985 and 52% of households were on benefits.

The area was prioritised for regeneration funding and a partnership was set up between the council, local communities, the North West Development Agency and English Partnerships. This partnership was intended to develop a regeneration framework and co-ordinate the regeneration initiatives benefiting the area, such as Sure Start, New Deal, Education Action Zone and two rounds of SRB.

The project's targets included raising educational attainment above the city average, creating a new town centre, doubling the population, building up to 12,500 new homes and creating a regional park system.

The crucial aspect of the programme was that it was community led. Listening to people's concerns and getting them involved was seen as key to securing the long term future of the area.

What has it done?

The Beacons programme has delivered 190 projects in five years including capacity building, participation building, community environment, community maintenance, youth streetwork and community sports.

The Beacons board has a majority of community representatives. There is a resident's forum with representatives of the resident associations and a public agencies forum made up of chief executives, set up to take the lead in ensuring that services are relevant and accountable to local people and in securing organisational and cultural change.

There was an initial emphasis on strengthening and building tenant and resident groups by creating a resident liaison team. This quadrupled the number of associations over five years and provided a strong basis for participation. The team currently supports resident representatives who have taken on new responsibilities and those who are participating in a pilot training project leading to a qualification in community involvement.

The Beacons has a Crime and Community Safety programme that has provided staff to co-ordinate responses to community concerns. Local Tasking meetings have been held to address the problems of communities that have become hot spots for anti-social behaviour. Community conferences have been held involving local people, councillors and young people to discuss the issue. This has allowed the work of youth services, police, the Beacons Youth Intervention Officer and the Beacons' neighbour nuisance teams to be co-ordinated and targeted more effectively.

A social inclusion toolkit was developed to help service providers examine their provision and identify how to make it more accessible to the community. It will be an impact assessment tool integrated into all council services.

An environmental team supports residents in developing ideas about environmental projects. The ideas are delivered through Community Link officers and there is support for residents in maintaining and managing their projects. Support includes providing training in grounds maintenance, filling in funding applications and linking residents to the police and neighbour nuisance team

to overcome any anti-social behaviour problems. Projects have included community gardens, play spaces, derelict land improvements, community events and recycling. These have helped residents feel more confident and regain ownership of open spaces.

The programme found that there were no traditional routes for local people into working in regeneration, so a project has been developed for regeneration apprentices. They will be given the opportunity for work experience and study so they can develop professional skills in engagement.

Outcomes

- In the past year juvenile nuisance in the area is down by 28%, criminal damage by 38%, burglary by 44% and vehicle theft by 47%
- Good practice in regeneration and renewal has been developed and shared with other regeneration programmes
- Police boundaries are being redrawn with assistance from the Beacons' Community Safety Manager to reflect ward boundaries.

Manchester Libraries Community Services Team

Background and aims

The service has always had an ethos of improving access and empowering excluded groups to use libraries. A best value review of the library service prompted a reorganisation from an old geographically based service to a thematic structure. As part of this change a new community services team was established and this allowed for co-ordination of the previous work being done in each of the districts. The service can now identify gaps and priorities and work more strategically.

What has it done?

The service has worked to support community led regeneration initiatives by finding funding for outreach work in specific areas and communities of interest. By working in an open way the service has adapted its practices to ensure that people are empowered rather than excluded.

In one community project library staff motivated young people by discussing the kind of service they wanted, changing the books and services supplied to take account of their views and taking them to a wholesale

book suppliers to participate in buying the books. The success of this approach in one community project for young people has led the service to duplicate the methods, influencing the design and delivery of information services across Manchester.

The service has targeted groups traditionally excluded from libraries. They have developed a project in Manchester Prison based on an existing prison library service. The project began with frequent requests from prisoners for books on setting up small businesses. Library staff were aware that the central library held a good collection that was inaccessible to prisoners, and that prisoners lacked the skills needed to become employed or self employed.

The project was developed early in 2003 with partners in the Probation Service and Prison Service and began by setting up a forum with inmates to find out what they wanted and the barriers they might face. The project used the experience of a business information specialist at the central library to establish an accessible business library in the prison. The project also employed a facilitator for a business club in the prison.

The club was the basis for an accredited programme leading inmates to write their own business plan. A referral system for prisoners being released has been set up so they are linked to ongoing support at the central library and this is linked with their probation period. The project is now being mainstreamed by the prison service.

The service worked with partners to secure ESF funding for a project with visually impaired people, 'Visions for the Future'. This was aimed at opening up the library and the information there. Staff brainstormed the idea with visually impaired users and adapted the project to their views. Visions for the Future led to one participant becoming a freelance trainer for staff on the needs of visually impaired people. For others the confidence building enabled them to identify their skills and move into training or volunteering.

The service is also supporting initiatives in refugee and Traveller communities in pursuit of its aim of opening up the service and empowering people to access the information and information skills they need to play a full part in their community.

The service has established the Eden Partnership, a steering group of representatives of all groups, including young people's groups to steer services and the engagement approach. This partnership has worked with the service on Visions for the Future and other projects.

Outcomes

- Travellers, prisoners, refugees and young people have been motivated and enabled to access services through targeted projects
- Experience of engagement has been fed across the service so that all areas can adapt their approach to service delivery to suit the needs of specific groups
- Young people are influencing the delivery of library services
- New funding has been secured to create a children's library in a community centre.

Tenant Participation Unit

Background and aims

The Unit was set up in 1984 to develop tenant involvement, mainly via tenant associations. The remit and work of the Unit developed and widened as the department restructured and as the tenants themselves became more involved in reviewing housing policy and procedures via Compact Task groups looking at key housing services. As a result, the approach to working with groups changed from supporting and advocating on behalf of groups to empowering tenants to carry out this work for themselves.

Participation is now increasingly devolved, with communication and local relationships between tenants and service providers improved, enabling tenants to better interact with services locally and have an impact on how services are delivered locally.

What has it done?

Tenants and residents are trained to enable them to deal with the local housing teams as well as the housing department. They are given support in basic committee skills which includes both training and face to face support. The Unit facilitates task groups to look at tenant involvement in every aspect of housing. Housing officers are also trained in how to work with tenants.

The unit supports tenants in gaining the skills to address wider concerns, not just housing. These include Anti-social Behaviour and the local environment. The drive to allow local tenants and residents to create and shape work on a variety of areas beyond housing has resulted in projects that more closely meet local needs.

The Unit facilitates the Compact task groups which enable tenant involvement at a policy development level in every aspect of housing services. Current task groups look at housing management services, housing investment options, BME involvement, finance and anti-social behaviour.

The TPU also support and train housing officers in tenant participation strategy, structures and consultation methods/techniques.

The unit supports tenant involvement in other services and wider concerns affecting the community and environment. Enabling local tenants and residents to create and shape work on a variety of issues beyond housing has resulted in projects that more closely meet local needs.

The impact of this approach can be seen in the development of the 'Communities Against Drugs' project. This began with the Crime and Disorder Partnership and reflected

their views about what was needed. By employing a Tenant Development Worker to work directly with Manchester City Council tenant and residents' groups on drug related issues, the unit identified that what local people wanted was information to help them understand drugs and help friends and family, rather than just challenging street corner dealing, which was its original focus.

The project created the opportunity for a drugs worker to develop personal relationships with local people to encourage them to speak freely about their experiences and problems. The worker organised drugs awareness training sessions for representatives of 34 tenant groups and ensured that local people and staff had the same knowledge and could therefore work together. They held an open day with outside trainers to create debate. They facilitated police meetings with tenant and residents groups about the operations they carried out against drugs, helping people to feel more confident that the police were working for them. The project produced a guide to drugs for staff and residents so they could understand the types and effects of drugs and the things that public services can do to combat them. The worker also encouraged groups to develop local strategies to deal with drugs.

Case studies

The unit targets hard-to-reach groups. They have created a BME tenants participation compact, organised focus groups to look at council services, and established a task group of individual BME tenants, rather than BME community leaders who are already represented on other structures. The task group receives regular presentations and updates from key service providers about how BME needs are being met. In September it held a successful BME Conference in Manchester Town Hall, which was advertised via BME press and radio. As a result more BME tenants from a wider variety of ethnic groups joined the task group.

The group introduces people to the idea that they can get involved locally, join tenants groups and have an impact on their area. The unit uses Manchester Council's translation and interpretation services for communication and at meetings and events. This has enabled people to take part who otherwise might not have attended. It has established a pool of interpreters better informed about council services than previously, who are able to impart this knowledge in appropriate situations.

Outcomes

- Tenants and residents are shaping the work done in their area
- Tenants are more confident that the authorities are tackling drug crime and are continually developing new strategies
- BME groups have more impact on strategy.

Newcastle



Decision-making at the heart of the community in Byker

Newcastle

Background

Newcastle is a vibrant and historic city located in the north east region of the UK. According to the 2001 Census the city has a resident population of 259,536 people. Newcastle can trace its origins to the Roman period during the first century AD and takes its name from the Norman castle built by William the Conqueror's eldest son in 1080. The city council is a unitary authority and encompasses 44 square miles (11,396 hectares) of land.

During the Industrial Revolution Newcastle grew rapidly and prospered on the back of the wool and coal industries and then later from armaments and shipbuilding. Newcastle's proximity to the sea has led to the city becoming one of Britain's most important sea ports. Today Newcastle's economy is in keeping with the rest of the UK, most heavy industry has disappeared from the city and the service sector has grown to become the dominant force of the local economy.

Newcastle does however contain many deprived areas. According to the IMD 2004 Newcastle is ranked as the twentieth most deprived local authority in England and Wales. In parts of Newcastle, one in five of the working-age population is out of work, and unemployment rates in the worst affected areas are nearly double the national average.⁷

Demographically 48% of Newcastle's population is male and 52% are female. The average age of a person living in Newcastle is 37.8 years. The White British population in Newcastle makes up 93.1% of the population, 1.2% is Indian, 1.9% Pakistani and 1% Bangladeshi. The White Irish population stands at 0.7%. 0.4% of the population is Black/Black British. 0.3% are from Africa and 1.2% are Chinese or from other ethnic groups. As for religion, 70.6% of the population describe themselves as being Christian, 3.6% are Muslims and 16% stated they were of no religion.

Strategic framework

The Newcastle Partnership has recently revised its Newcastle Plan comprising the Community Strategy and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, placing 'involving people' at the heart of the activity and making it a cross-cutting theme. The Council's commitment to this flows into the Corporate Plan and member portfolios.

The current review of the Council's values reflects the Newcastle Partnership's commitment putting the citizen at the heart of everything it does, valuing the contribution of partners and recognising the diversity of Newcastle's people as a strength.

The Council has developed a Participation Plan and a corporate working group to develop a joined up approach to community participation across Directorates. The Participation Plan describes how they will develop community participation, indicating committed projects and timescales clearly aligned to the objectives of the Community Strategy. Over 1,000 people gave their views on a Participation Green Paper before the Plan was produced and for this the Council won a national award from Britannia, Simply the Best – Communication in Housing awards.

The Council has a community development team of 42 staff. The community development section is located in the Chief Executive's Office alongside strategic posts, reflecting the commitment of the Council to the strategic importance of community development and empowerment.

Future plans

The Council's corporate working group on community participation across Directorates will continue and will be strengthened by the Civic Pioneer network, by building on learning and helping the process to progress quickly. The Council will continue its involvement in an EU exchange network called URBACT Partecipando for European cities that are focusing on citizen participation. Through this network Newcastle is part of the development of strategy and policy across the EU. Through this network the Council is hoping to learn from other European partner cities and also to use the exercise to improve learning across the city and across its partnerships.

The Council's community development team will strengthen the local area and city wide delivery of the Newcastle Plan, developing frameworks for community development activity with other partner organisations, such as the community empowerment network, working together to our common aims.

Devolved budgets and local representation at an area level have been a part of the Council's committee structure for some time. The Council will be carrying out a review of the governance at an area level, supported by conclusions of a report by CLES consultants recommending area networks be put into place to enhance partnership working at an area level across the city. The community development team will also be tasked with supporting local engagement with the area governance arrangements.

⁷ <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/pr.nsf/a/Unemployment>

Case studies

Urban Design Team – Byker Urban Design Competition

Background and aims

The Byker ward is the third most deprived ward in the city and in the top 20% in the country. It was an area of working class housing until the terraces and flats were cleared and replaced as part of a phased redevelopment from 1969 to 1982. The redevelopment was part of an experimental approach to ‘community architecture’ at the time that had an ethos of building and retaining communities with a transparent design process. The community at the time had a strong commitment to the area.

Since the redevelopment, Byker has suffered from stigma, difficult and resource intensive management and developed a range of problems including anti-social behaviour. There is also a general legacy of mistrust in the area due to previous rounds of regeneration in the city that were often seen as exercises in demolition and clearances, where problems were displaced rather than solved.

The regeneration of the area was proposed in 2000 at the same time as the estate was

proposed for ‘listing’ by English Heritage and a consultation process carried out. In line with changes in planning legislation and current best practice in planning the regeneration was intended to have strong community involvement and ownership. It is also guided by the corporate plan, which makes it clear that strategic regeneration is both physical and social; as well as the initial ethos and approach to community architecture that was evident in the original estate redevelopment.

A two stage urban design competition was proposed as the next stage in the regeneration process, as part of the approach to considering and appraising redevelopment options for housing and community facilities. The Urban Design Team decided the approach would be transparent and housing would be secondary to the creation of a collaborative process of working with the community. The Team would respond to the community by creating an evolutionary process of audit and change. The objectives would be increasing community

ownership and leadership, and engaging with people outside current networks.

The intention is to learn and improve the community engagement processes as the project progresses and so the approach also placed a strong emphasis on community audit, peer review by local people and benchmarking with other European cities. The Team has very close links with Newcastle University⁸ and works collaboratively, which brings in new ideas and opportunities for innovative work.

What has it done?

The process began in 2003 with awareness raising events by the Team at community centres. This uncovered a strong commitment to living in the area and concerns about the housing mix. The Team then held a public meeting at a local school with invitations widely distributed and sent home with pupils. Workshops and questionnaires collected information on concerns.

Leaflets were then sent to all residents to explain the competition and give details of future consultation events. Further public meetings and exhibitions were held, and a workshop with local children. A community meeting took place at the request of residents in a community venue and this was attended by Council officers and people from other areas in Newcastle that had been through the regeneration process recently. This exchange of lessons learnt increased the trust of residents in the council’s commitment to the process.

Community development workers went from house to house to engage people. Training was done with local people and study visits undertaken to comparative regeneration projects throughout the UK and Sweden. These explored design issues such as Home Zones, carbon-neutral development, community-led developments such as Coin Street on the South Bank in London, and to recent schemes in Greenwich and Stockholm by the original

architect of the Byker regeneration in the 1970s. 20-25 people participated in each of the trips and the most involved were nominated onto the judging panel as resident representatives. The judging panel was approximately one third professional, one third elected members and one third local residents.

Throughout the process the Urban Design Team worked with community representatives and residents generally getting feedback. Residents talked to neighbours, set up a resident’s group, distributed their own flyers and asked for support. When feedback identified that residents were concerned they didn’t know enough to understand what was happening, seminars and one stop shop sessions were set up. Informal networks were also used to get information across, and street wardens, police and teachers were all involved.

To ensure that residents have some real control over the regeneration process, a ‘community charter’ was

developed to be included as part of the judging and legal assessment criteria of the second stage of the competition⁹ that gave residents power over judging the delivery of the regeneration. This ‘community charter’ requires an independent resident advocate to sit on the project’s technical team that is responsible for overseeing delivery; and there is a requirement for the short-listed and winning design team(s) to work on site, be accessible to local people and to live locally¹⁰.

Through this process, the Team learned the importance of a time frame that can incorporate a community learning curve and the resource implications for ‘front-loading’ the statutory planning system and making a commitment to community empowerment. It also learned the need to challenge the community and move them forward from concerns stemming from past experiences of housing clearances.

⁹ The second stage of the design competition is selecting a single consortium (design team and developer) from a short list of five design teams with five distinctively different design approaches.

¹⁰ Newcastle City Council has converted a ground floor flat within the estate into an architects’ office and studio as a base for the design teams. This was partly inspired by the original estate architect, Ralph Erskine who had his working office on site.

Outcomes

The community involvement process is still evolving and the regeneration project is at a stage where hard outcomes are not yet deliverable. The process has, however, been audited by Newcastle University who have found:

- The ability of the community representatives to access and control resources is improving
- The community feels there has been an increase in inclusion
- The community considers the use of familiar community venues in the consultation to be effective and empowering.

⁸ The urban Design Team has been working with the Global Urban Research Unit at Newcastle University and the audit of the first stage of community engagement for the Byker Urban Design Competition (using the Yorkshire Forward’s ‘Active Partners’ methodology) is intended to provide the basis for the Statement of Community Involvement in the statutory planning system. The document is available for downloading from the competition website at www.newcastle.gov.uk/byker

Newcastle New Deal for Communities

Background and aims

The Inner West End of Newcastle is an area in the bottom 5% of deprivation indices. It has a population of 10,000 and a large Asian community alongside long-standing white British communities. It was awarded £55 million over ten years and from the start there was an insistence on community engagement in the governance and strategy of the programme.

There was a history of housing clearances in the area however and the local community had little confidence that the New Deal was not just an excuse for knocking down houses. Local people felt that regeneration left little of value behind and that they had been blamed and stigmatised for wasting money when the fault lay with short term programmes.

In the first three years of the programme it was struggling to make an impact but has since been turned around and is now branded excellent.

What has it done?

The area was broken into recognisable neighbourhoods and these were grouped into four areas. Each of these areas held elections for local representatives with postal voting based on the electoral register, recently expanded to include 16 and 17 year olds

and others who may not be on the official city register. Elected representatives sit on the Board of 23 and formed an inbuilt majority. There is a good cross section of residents on the board reflecting the diverse range of communities that make up the area. Also on the board are four council members and non voting representatives from the Police, Local Authority and Primary Care Trust.

There are five focus groups made up of organisations and residents with an interest and each is responsible for the delivery of the themes of Health, Education, Jobs and Business, Homes and Environment, Crime and Community Safety and 'Our Community' which includes community engagement and capacity building, investment in community buildings, work with children and young people and an ICT Delivery Programme. Each has a chair or vice-chair that is a local person.

The early problems of the programme were dealt with by focusing on clarifying community priorities, defining what the programme was trying to achieve and setting clear targets in each theme. The focus groups were engaged in identifying the projects that met the targets most appropriately. Residents were learning rapidly and developing their understanding of basic principles, including the

requirement of clear evidence of need for a project, the appraisal of a project so it is effective and measurable, and appreciating that projects being selected were designed to achieve particular objectives.

Individual projects and their contribution to the achievement of targets are assessed through a dual process of monitoring and evaluations. Recent annual review of progress across the themes indicates that almost all targets have been achieved or are well on course to be achieved on time.

Some focus groups are now also influencing the spending of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and achieving the mainstreaming of some of the successful projects across the whole city. Over 110 projects are being delivered.

There is a budget for work to generate confidence in the community and engage local residents not only in the New Deal programme itself but also in achieving improvements in their local neighbourhoods.

One of the major pieces of capacity building amongst residents came with the development of the Community Regeneration Team (CRT). This project was designed by local residents supported by NDC staff and a Local Authority Community Development Worker.

The CRT, with an experienced core team of Community Development Workers (CDWs), has recruited six local residents to train as CDWs. The benefits of this included residents having a local knowledge of and identity with their area and culture. When this was combined with training in community engagement tools and community development skills, it was felt to be the ideal combination to genuinely start work with people at grass roots level, helping them engage with NDC and their own local agenda. It was felt to be particularly important in a community where there is extreme suspicion of 'outsiders' and a reticence about engaging with professionals, that local residents as CDWs are able quickly to build a rapport with the community and are accepted more easily.

Six residents were recruited from the local community and are currently completing NVQ Community Development Work Level 2. They will go on to study at Level 3.

Outcomes

- Over 100 empty homes brought back into use supported by the 'Private Rented Project'
- 553 homes received physical improvements
- 60 new childcare places created
- 2 new classroom assistants in every Primary School
- 8 new Community Groups created and 17 groups supported by the CRT
- Community Groups have been helped to raise £103,000 of new funding
- Crime down by 16% overall
- Postal voting for community elections attracted a 41% turnout compared with 24% for NDC wards in the local government polls.

North Benwell Neighbourhood Management Initiative

Background and aims

North Benwell is an area which scores highly on the deprivation index and has had problems with low attainment, anti-social behaviour, crime, poor quality housing and low incomes. It has had SRB funding over the past decade for capital and environmental improvements, but these did not make an impact on the social problems of the area.

The neighbourhood management initiative has been running since September 2003 and is funded by the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder. It aims to create a sustainable community by improving services in the area, improving the physical state of the area, increasing community confidence, increasing numbers of residents, cutting crime and reducing social and economic inequalities.

What has it done?

The initiative is a partnership between the Council and the Home Housing Association. It has established a Street Warden's Team, a Policing Team, a Neighbourhood Manager, and a Community Development Worker in the local community.

The Neighbourhood Manager generates momentum and co-ordinates services. They ensure that there is a more strategic approach to services in the area and that the many local voluntary and statutory sector providers can work together and prevent any duplication of effort. They also consult local people and work with local groups. They have consulted local people on their levels of involvement in decisions and brought residents into decisions about empty properties and street cleaning. They have included residents in meetings with the Council on the way money is being spent in the area, and are working to create an evaluation system that includes community priorities and how the community feels about the area. Local people are setting targets and monitoring progress.

A Partnership Board is being developed with local people to guide the delivery of services. Training and support is being provided by the Neighbourhood Manager and Community Development Worker.

A community project has been created to support people in setting up local groups and linking into representative organisations. The project has supported a

new parent and toddler group, a photography course, healthy activities, drop in sessions and literacy work. It also organises community festivals and celebrations which are run by and for local people. These events are used to consult with the community about development.

There are four Street Wardens who patrol the area seven days a week. They hold regular surgeries, get involved in community activities and are in constant contact with local residents and businesses. They work with schools, youth projects, police and other services. They particularly target work at children and young people and are also piloting a Junior Street Warden Scheme.

The Community Policing Team is jointly funded by the Northumbria Police and the Pathfinder Initiative and there is a team of 10 PCs and a Sergeant dedicated to the area and patrolling daily. The Team is well networked with the Neighbourhood Office and has a strong emphasis on engaging the community and building their confidence. Along with the street wardens the community police team has carried out a survey of residents' opinions on policing. They have had a dramatic impact on crime in their first year.

Detached Youth projects in the area have been supported and a range of diversionary activities provided for young people. These have been targeted at times when the Police and young people have identified there is nothing to do. The activities included arts and crafts, street games and a disco and have been very popular with between 80 and 100 young people at each session.



Making life better in North Benwell

Outcomes

- Houses due to be demolished have been saved and the action plan is being revised to take account of residents' views
- Crime has dropped by 30% in December 2004 compared to December 2003
- Residents, the Neighbourhood Office and the Home Housing Association worked together to clear 10.5 tonnes of rubbish in a clear-up week and replanted the cleared areas
- Empty homes have been reduced by almost 50%.

Have a Gay Say Day

Background and aims

The Council provided officer support to a steering group of representatives from the lesbian, gay male and bisexual community in Newcastle. The objectives were to organise a consultation event and to engage the community in a discussion and consultation process. Improving communication and links between the Council and the community was the overall aim of the initiative.

What has it done?

A consultation event was planned by the steering group in March 2004. The venue chosen was near an area popular with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The event was publicised and supported by the use of 'walker talkers' who would encourage others to attend, target gay pubs and clubs and gather information through a questionnaire.

Leaflets were distributed to libraries, cafes, doctors surgeries and through specialised mailing lists. Websites, radio, banners and local papers were also used.

The questionnaires from the walker talkers were used to identify important issues and ensure that there were council officers at the consultation who could answer questions. Council officers attending the event had training to ensure they could react sensitively to the community.

The event had a workshop format where groups had an opportunity to talk to each of the identified council departments and to create a list of priorities and actions. A report with recommendations was produced and sent to the council for feedback and action.

The steering group is continuing to oversee the development of the process of engagement with the community.

Outcomes

- The steering group now provides a point of contact between the community and the council and is engaged in regular discussions with officers to improve training and service delivery
- In response to the consultation recommendations the council will be providing a worker and financial support for the community
- The steering group is involved in redrafting council publicity to include positive references to the community.

Newham



Newham's Mayor, Sir Robin Wales, with local residents

Newham

Background

Situated in the heart of the East End of London, the London Borough of Newham takes in much of London's revitalized docklands, including City Airport and the ExCeL international exhibition centre. According to the 2001 census the population of Newham stands at 243,891. As a London borough, Newham is a unitary local authority and covers 15 square miles (or 3,858 hectares) of land.

Historically associated with high levels of deprivation and poverty, Newham has in the last few years forged ahead with major regeneration initiatives, which are repositioning the borough as a key transport, residential and business location in the capital. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004 however rank Newham as the eleventh most deprived local authority in England. Only 47.7% of Newham's population is employed (the national average for England and Wales is 60.6%). Newham suffers from a high unemployment rate at 6.7% and has a high percentage of economically inactive people: people who are sick or disabled and a high number of people looking after family members.

Demographically, Newham is a diverse borough: 49% of the population are male and 51% are female. Interestingly, Newham also has the youngest population in London: the average age of a person living in Newham is only 31.8 years. Newham is exceptionally diverse with more than 60% of residents coming from BME communities: 39.4% of Newham's Population is White British, 13.1% African, 12.1% Indian, 8.8% Bangladeshi, 8.5% Pakistani, 7.4% Afro Caribbean and 1.3% are White Irish. Almost half the residents of Newham described their religion as Christian (46.8%), 24.3% are Muslims and only 9% describe themselves as being of no religious faith.

Strategic framework

The community strategy is driven by the Local Strategic Partnership, which looks at floor targets and how activities are making an impact on improving local services. Issues such as community safety and delivery of council services are tracked through this mechanism.

Future plans

Programmes of participation and engagement are being refined for each of the Forums, summarised in simple work plans that are then complimented by Borough-wide initiatives (such as marketing campaigns and research programmes). These are intended to allow partner agencies to identify shared action lines, as well as forming the basis of communication tools back to communities.

Case studies

Member Development Programme – influential councillor scheme

Background and aims

The programme grew out of the introduction of the Cabinet system and the election of the first directly elected executive mayor in Newham in May 2002. Under this model, executive decisions are made by the Mayor, usually in consultation with the cabinet, and council officers. This created a need to develop the roles of councillors without portfolios in particular the representational roles. It was important to support elected members in focusing on and leading the community effectively and to balance the investment in community forums which were seen as alternative structures for consulting local people and supporting local democracy.

The aim was to ensure that local councillors were fully informed, consulted on and involved in upcoming issues and decisions that affect their area or community. Support and development opportunities would be available to help them lead their communities, including those that did not participate in community forums. Regular meetings with councillors in the community forum area helped them to plan and work together to ensure they are representing different groups and attended chosen community events or meetings.

What has it done?

Since 2002 the Mayor has appointed one lead member and 2 support members to each community forum. The lead member role was developed into the wider influential councillor role in September 2004. There are 10 lead members covering the whole of the borough, each representing one of the 10 community forum areas. These are larger than wards.

The service is supported by one officer with support from other staff in Member Services. In the future there will be a permanent structure of 2-3 staff and a Members Development Officer to support this function. The service works with lead influential councillors to look in detail at how they want to develop their influential councillor role locally, which groups they and other ward councillors have contact with and those that they want to make contact with, issues they have identified in their community, how they want to address these and what they want to achieve over the next year. They consult and work with councillors in their area to draw up action plans with the help of Member Services Officers so that they have a clear process to monitor actions by officers and so that their performance can also be

monitored. This process allows councillors to respond to their communities by addressing detailed issues that may not be relevant to area forums in a structured way and enable councillors to reach other groups in a more co-ordinated way. They may pick up a new community that requires particular support from a service like a local school. Their action plan would set targets, the timescales for action and the overall purpose of the action.

Members are also supported in the community if they wish. Staff can make links and arrange a walkabout or site visit for them. The form of support required is negotiated and detailed in action plans. Staff can help members to find out what other groups need in order to be engaged and how to engage them, for example through schools and faith groups.

Staff also support members to come together and co-ordinate information and action so they are working as a team at ward level and in area forums.

The service already has an annual comprehensive training programme which is produced in consultation with members. The programme includes knowledge and skills based

courses. The Community Development Foundation has supplied skills based training to develop community based skills. Knowledge based training tends to be provided by council officers or specialist providers. The training covered a variety of skills such as persuading and influencing, corporate risk management facilitation and problem solving. Issue based training has included pollution, freedom of information legislation and choice based lettings schemes.

The service will also create personal development plans for members, so that they can identify their skills and areas where they feel they need further training in order to work more effectively in their communities and to keep up to date with issues.

Electronic ward newsletters have been developed for councillors to provide a tool for communicating information about what is going on in their ward or community forum area giving an appropriate level of detail and focus, rather than just providing members with borough-wide papers containing too much information to be absorbed at a local level or having to roam round the internet/intranet to find ward/community forum based information. Information is now drilled down so a member knows what is happening in the ward, is briefed on what the implications are and on how to find further information. This means members are more fully briefed and can answer constituents' questions and can present relevant issues to area forums and give relevant updates.

Outcomes

- The programme is carrying out an audit to establish those decisions. Influential councillors have been consulted since its implementation in November and this audit will be carried out every four months to monitor the implementation of the scheme
- Members have identified which local decisions they wish to be consulted on before the Mayor or Officers make decisions
- Nine of the 10 influential councillors have produced action plans and are in the process of implementing them
- Influential councillors and ward members will meet in the community forum areas at least three times a year to discuss their action plans and strategies. Part of the action plan is to examine the effectiveness of each action
- The ward based newsletters have made members feel more informed about what is going on in their wards and are developing to be used by the Police and Health Service to keep councillors informed.

Community Participation Unit

Background and aims

The unit's aims are to foster the active involvement of all Newham's communities and to ensure individuals feel connected to the development of a socially and economically thriving borough. It works in partnership with statutory partners, community and voluntary sector groups to develop community empowerment and involvement in community planning and build the capacity of local communities to gain the knowledge and confidence to influence the decision making processes of local public sector bodies.

In such a diverse Borough, finding routes for participation needs to be responsive, and exploring how the faith sector can be such a route is under active consideration. Caveats were raised however about the accepted wisdom of relying on faith leaders for widening access to communities. Research suggested that people discuss the issues relevant to local services and local democracy with their friends and family, rather than with faith leaders.

The Unit is also seeking to engage with non geographical communities of interest, again regarded by the council as being particularly strong in Newham and not necessarily

easily reached by local forums that take a largely geographically based approach. This view of the community in Newham has led the council to place more emphasis on innovative and informal methods of communication and consultation with the community, whilst being clear that integrating these diverse approaches is essential if overall strategic aims are to be realised.

What has it done?

There are ten community forums in Newham all of which have developed neighbourhood action plans. These plans specify local priorities, set within a strategic framework of priorities identified by both Community Forums and the Council's Local Action Partnership Boards. This bringing together of local actions and strategic objectives is essential to an integrated approach to realising the LSP's overall aims.

This work is complemented by a programme of community participation that develops new and innovative approaches to fostering engagement, either through the Community Forums or other partner vehicles, such as the Youth Parliament or direct to Elected Members. This parallel stream of work strives to minimise the risk of

excluding those members of the community less confident or willing to attend meetings. Research on some key issues suggested that policy and development could be in danger of being driven by some strong interests that were not representative of the views and will of the community and so the Unit produces programmes that enable as many people as possible to participate in a variety of ways to help to minimise this risk.

The Unit uses a range of community activities as a complementary strand to the forums to create a soft way into engagement for the more reticent or difficult to reach. There is a festivals and celebrations team that organises events designed to bring people together and create a foundation for consultation. At these events people can be asked for their views informally, or identified as being interested in being further involved. Shared activities such as exhibitions of dance or festivals of the literature of Newham's diverse communities are seen as ideal opportunities to increase communication and understanding between communities and between the council and communities. The Unit uses the Local development Framework as a way to reach many communities and trigger debate about Borough-wide concerns.

Case studies

As part of this drive to widen the range of views available to the council there is a scheme under way to loan tools such as video cameras to members of the community. People are asked to record the views of their family and friends, what they think about life in Newham and so on. The contents of the tapes are then fed back into the neighbourhood forums and neighbourhood action plans. This is intended to capture views that would not normally be put forward.

The Unit has fostered close links with many 'service delivery' teams, such as sports, libraries and parks, again fostering the opportunity to promote consultation and engagement linked to non threatening activities, inclusive activities such as gardening initiatives, clubs and reading festivals.

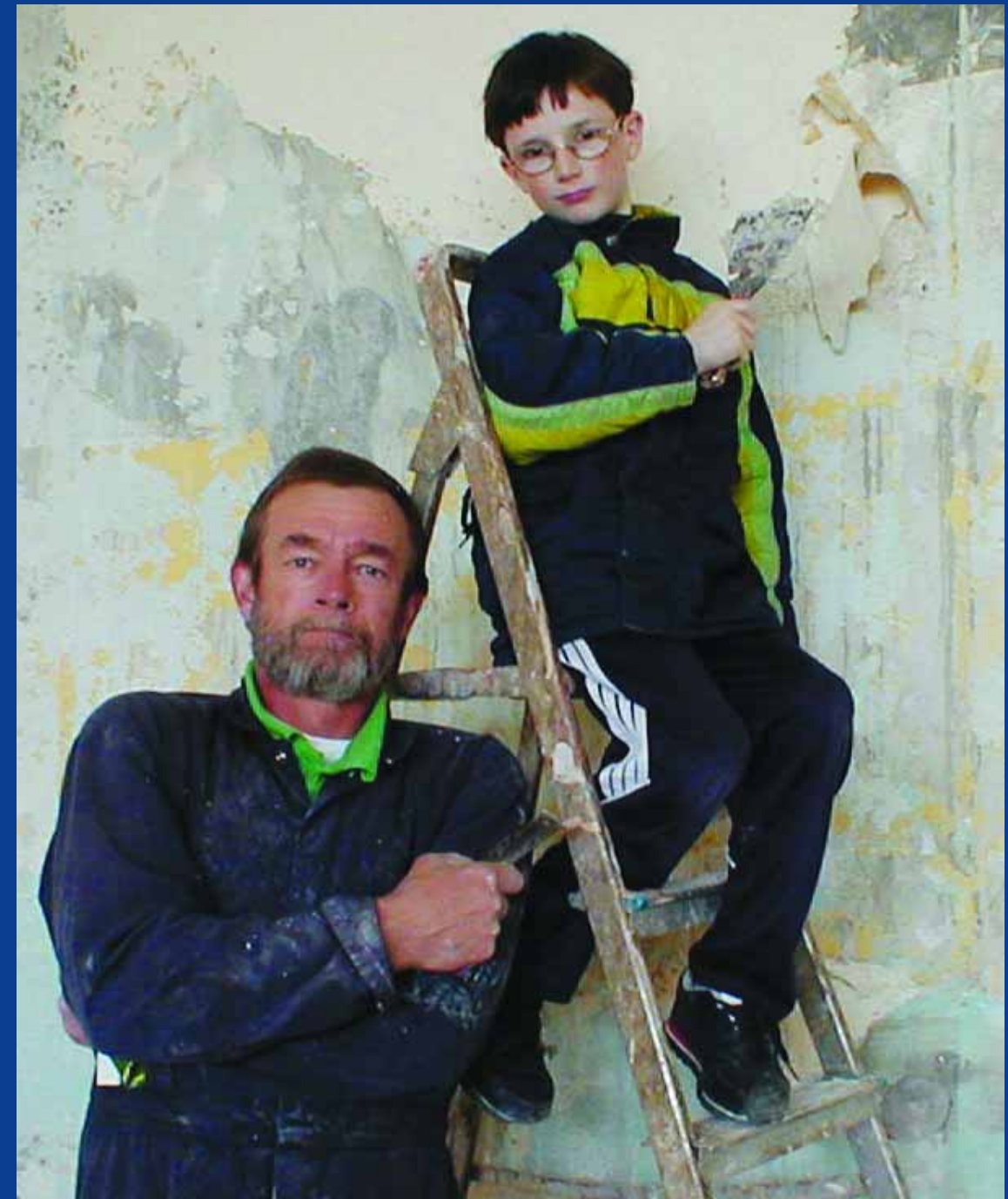
Harnessing the interest of the community in their environment and shared cultural and creative programmes is seen as providing a potentially more inclusive approach for establishing a relationship with people and a channel of communication that is much less formal and acceptable. It offers a practical way for people to become more connected and invested in their community.

Outcomes

The Unit is in the process of evaluating its work against baseline data on participation and the Borough's Household Panel Survey to assess the impact on people in terms of their identification with the Borough and perceptions around ability to influence service delivery.

- Ten Neighbourhood Action Plans have been created that are linked into the LSP's Local Action Partnership Boards
- Programmes of participation and engagement are being created for each forum with simple work plans that allow partner agencies to identify shared action.

Plymouth



Hands on with the community in Plymouth's East End

Plymouth

Background

Plymouth is in the county of Devon and has a resident population of 240,720 people as measured in the 2001 census. It is the regional capital of both Devon and Cornwall and the second largest city on the South Coast. Following massive rebuilding after severe bombing in the Second World War, Plymouth is now a vibrant modern city as well as an historic seafaring port. Plymouth is a unitary authority and the council covers 30.8 square miles (7970 hectares) of land.

Plymouth's economy is closely tied to the defence industry. The city's dockyards are a major employer in the area contributing significantly to the local economy, both directly in terms of employment and through tourism. Recent losses in the defence industry have however been offset by new businesses that have started up, amongst them call centres and hi-tech companies. The other major employers in the town are the council and the university.

The indices of deprivation 2004 rate Plymouth as the seventy sixth most deprived local authority in England. Unemployment levels are close to the national average at 3.2%, and although recent statistics present an overall economic picture of good employment and earnings growth, Plymouth's population suffers from educational under achievement, worsening business formation rates and static or improving unemployment rates compared with the rest of Britain¹¹. Average earnings are the lowest in the south west peninsula.

Demographically 49% of Plymouth's population is male and 51% are female. The average age of a person resident in Plymouth is 38.5 years. A massive 98.4% of Plymouth's population is White British, 0.6% White Irish, 0.3% come from Asian/Asian British backgrounds and 0.2% from Black/ Black British. 0.5% are from Chinese or other Ethnic groups. As for religion 73.6% of the population describe themselves as Christians, 18.3% of the population describe themselves as of no religion and 0.4% are Muslims.

Strategic framework

The council has been going through a fundamental review of its strategy and its structures to embed the values of empowerment and engagement from the top to the bottom. It has reviewed its constitution, standing orders and financial regulations with the aim of emphasising democracy and participation. The strategic documents and frameworks throughout the council are being realigned so that the City strategy, the performance management framework, area action plans, area committees and Local Strategic Partnerships are all driven by community consultation and engagement. To facilitate this process a new neighbourhood map has been drawn up on the basis of 42 traditional communities rather than the ward boundaries. Neighbourhood action plans are being drawn up on the basis of these boundaries with the involvement of local people.

Future plans

During spring 2005 Plymouth City Council will:

- Complete a strategic review of all departmental consultation arrangements, using a dedicated team of eighteen managers across the entire organisation. This will lead to a revised consultation strategy, where community involvement is co-ordinated and monitored against the Council's Civic Pioneer Protocol
- Launch a radical new approach to service planning, where consultation activity is embedded in the Council's corporate performance management system, enabling all consultation activity to be monitored by the Council's scrutiny panels and the corporate management team
- Reflect Civic Pioneer priorities within a revised Corporate Plan
- Adopt revised local area democratic arrangements placing the community and voluntary sector at the heart of local democracy and involving young people as well as other 'hard to reach' groups
- Agree a radical citizenship programme for young people in the City, delivering specific and measurable citizenship outcomes to over 2000 young people in the first year, using 'intensive citizenship programmes'. Themes will include 'understanding society', 'political literacy', 'social justice', 'equality and diversity' and 'participation'
- Adopt Civic Pioneer principles at Local Strategic Partnership level
- Put in place an Area Co-ordination strategy ensuring that the Council is able to respond corporately to local issues at front line service level.

¹¹ http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/yourcouncil/business/economic_development/plymouth_sub-regional_partnership_-_annual_review.htm

Case studies

Morice Town Home Zone

Background and aims

A government white paper on Road Safety brought the concept of Home Zones to the attention of the Council's Road Safety Manager, who followed up the concept and was impressed by the potential. The officer contacted the Department for Transport to express an interest and Plymouth was subsequently chosen as one of nine areas for a national Home Zones pilot.

There was no central government funding attached to this pilot, so a community on the edge of an existing SRB area was chosen, Morice Town, which did have the potential of attracting funding. Morice Town was a community divided by through routes and rat runs, with roads carrying traffic travelling at inappropriate speeds into and across Plymouth. In an initial traffic survey a recorded speed of 61 miles per hour was recorded outside the school at 3.00-4.00pm, in addition to other speeds in excess of the permitted limit of 30mph. The area had no community groups and had considerable problems with anti-social behaviour. The area also had little investment in previous regeneration programmes.

The central idea and impetus for the Home Zone initiative was to regenerate the area and to give it a new lease of life. Specifically it was hoped to improve the quality of life for residents. This was matched with a commitment to community consultation and bringing different groups of residents together. When the project was announced however the feeling of the community was very negative and there was little trust in the council's intention to deliver on the Home Zone, or in their intention to consult and give ownership of the project to the community. This led the council to recognise that this would be a long term process of working with the community to build trust.

What has it done?

The initiative began with large meetings in Morice Town to introduce the concept of Home Zones. These meetings gained initial interest, but became less effective as the capacity of the community to engage positively was low. The initiative was then carried forward by a 'planning for real' event and a one to one questionnaire, developed in consultation with local people. The survey targeted those not generally involved, such as children and older people.

The 'planning for real' exercise took a bus with plans into the community in the evenings and at weekends. It also involved local schools, with children making models and designing elements of the scheme.

The exercise identified a wide variety of community concerns, but some were conflicting and made the creation of consensus difficult. It seemed from the consultation that local people did not fully understand the concept, so a group was taken to see Home Zones in Holland and talk to the original designer and they fed back what they had seen to the community.

To help get over the lingering issues about trust, the council decided to appoint external consultants to create a vision for the project, with residents making up a large contingent of the interview panel. The consultants facilitated a design workshop with local people and produced a visual image of the proposals. This was taken back to a public meeting where it won the support of most local people. The consultants then produced a street by street design to address any problems and led further workshops to gain agreement on the details.

The lengthy process of design with consultation at every stage was supported by investment in infrastructure such as a newsletter written and edited by the community, a community advisory group and in the personal contact and presence in the community of the council's Road Safety Officer. This consistent emphasis on community involvement and

empowerment added considerable value to a scheme which could have been concentrated only on the physical renewal of the area. The clear investment in this ethos by council officers meant that the delivery of the initiative created changes in attitudes of local people to the council and to the development and provision of services.

Outcomes

- Incidents of violence, theft and damage reduced from 142 in the year before the Zone to nine in the year after it was completed, a reduction of nearly 94%
- Average speed of traffic dropped to 13 miles an hour, less than 50% of previously recorded speeds
- Through traffic was cut by 40%
- Community groups thriving including gardening club and history club
- Community events, such as an annual street fete, Christmas carol services and regular barbecues run by local people
- Rise in community pride demonstrated by the public spaces now maintained by local people
- Property prices 15% higher than surrounding areas
- Community Forum able to attract funding for Sure Start Centre and develop new community projects.

East End Partnership

Background and aims

The East End is centred on the communities of Cattedown, Coxside and Prince Rock on the eastern side of Plymouth. It has a resident population of 5000+ and is an area with high levels of unemployment and housing unfitness; increasing crime and community safety problems; poor community and environmental facilities; significant health issues and inequalities and high transport movements. It is an area of traditional terraced houses and flats, many privately rented and with a transient population. The three communities of the East End have strongly defined traditional boundaries and had a tendency to have little interaction.

The Partnership began in 1998, set up by three community associations, the council, Housing Associations and the Police. Local people had some awareness of the need for a better infrastructure and more co-operation and a few activists were aware of the potential to attract SRB funding. The area won funding in the SRB round 6. This funding was followed in May 2000 by the declaration of the East End Renewal Area with the aim of improving living conditions and quality of life of residents, thereby helping to

tackle poverty and social exclusion, health inequalities and neighbourhood decline.

The new funding allowed the council to further support the Partnership by opening a council renewal office with dedicated staff, based in a house in the community. This office has direct access to nominated senior officers in every council department in order to create confidence in the ability of local people to get things done.

The arrival of funding triggered an early consultation process where the community was told that they could control the process, but did not trust the offer and did not understand the processes involved in spending public money. This revealed the need to capacity build in the community to enable them to participate fully in decisions and in improving services.

What has it done?

The Partnership has set up structures which have an element of fluidity, can work at a variety of levels from LSP to individuals and can respond quickly to emerging issues. There are 26 volunteers who represent a particular street or streets. These volunteers bring issues to the partnership, consult people in their street and feedback to them individually.

The Partnership has encouraged and facilitated every community to call open meetings to address issues when they arise, often chaired by community representatives, and attended by relevant services. Partnership staff encourage people on a personal basis to bring up issues and follow them up with services. Community meetings can also be called by the council or particular services.

Issues dealt with have included anti-social behaviour that was having a serious impact on one housing estate, the Radford Estate. Local people raised the issue, meetings were held that brought Police and community together to discuss the issue and these led to an increase in patrols in the street and an observable improvement. This built confidence in local people that services will respond when the community requires it.

The Partnership also delegates authority to a variety of sub-groups on subjects which have attracted sufficient interest and involvement. These are led by local people who are particularly interested in one issue and may not be involved in any other way.

The Partnership has employed local people with development skills. They have identified individuals with an interest and worked with them on a one to one basis to help them learn how to develop their interest into a new community group or service, such as a family learning group or a carnival group.

Training in chairing meetings, health and safety, first aid, risk assessment, finance and IT is delivered by the Partnership for local people to enable them to become more involved.

The ability of people to understand local government and local services has been raised by their experience of the regeneration and renewal funding and the participatory process of spending it that

was adopted by the Partnership. It has also been raised by the Partnership's commitment to providing a realistic response for those who become involved and to recognising that being able to deliver on promises is a key element of what they do.



East End Community Volunteers create their Resource Centre

Outcomes

- Crime figures improved from 32 reported instances of youth related anti-social behaviour on the Radford Estate between May and August 2003 to ten between September and December 2003 – the months following the initiative. Between July and October 2004, there was a further drop to seven reported instances.¹² This is an overall reduction over this period of 78%
- Local people now expect to be consulted in new initiatives and object if they are not
- Through the Partnership the local community is supporting and informing the development of area forums and the LSP
- Services respond direct to the community and have improved their response to local problems.

¹² Source: Devon and Cornwall Constabulary

Tenant Involvement Project

Background and aims

The Tenant Involvement Project was set up in 2003 by the council to improve services and the level of support for tenant empowerment. The initiative was led by a community development consultant based in the Housing Department. It had the aim of creating a clear vision in the Department for the involvement of tenants and embedding the approach.

What has it done?

The Project held vision days with tenants, leaseholders, residents groups, councillors and council officers to develop a Tenant Participation Plan which will be reviewed yearly by tenants.

The Project has facilitated regular open meetings without agendas where tenants can bring forward any issue that concerns them.

There have also been focus groups and consultations, including the Council's housing stock options survey. They have carried out telephone and postal surveys and developed a newsletter distributed to 16,000 households which carries a regular survey that receives about 2000 returns. Through this process local performance indicators have been developed with tenants.

Service Review Groups are held regularly, attended by tenants with a particular interest in a service and representatives of the services concerned. These review groups include anti-social behaviour, repairs, caretaking, communication and consultation, housing maintenance contracts and leaseholders' issues.

There is also a group of tenants and council officers that works to develop ways to offer training and support. The group members source

and test out training courses, such as public speaking skills, and report back to the group on their quality and relevance to other tenants. Training is available through partners with external funding.

Tenant representatives have been loaned laptops and connected to the council's internal computer network with similar access to information as council staff. Through the support and training offered by tenant participation, one unemployed tenant went on to become an Audit Commission Tenant Inspector.

The Project has worked with tenant groups to develop ways to engage young people and they will be targeting BME groups and the disabled who have also traditionally been excluded.

The project will now be carried forward by a dedicated unit in the Housing Department.

Outcomes

- Tenants involved in the Interested Tenants Network moved from zero to 400 in one year
- Quarterly tenants' roadshows are now requested by tenants and are popular with housing services
- The quarterly tenants' newsletter is written and edited by a panel that includes tenants
- Tenants have produced local performance indicators
- Tenants meet service providers regularly
- Housing services are improving.

Rochdale



The Carnival of Culture brings people together

Rochdale

Background

The Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale is approximately 12 miles north east of Manchester. It includes the town of Rochdale, a number of small towns and villages and vast open expanses of moorland, woodlands and river valleys. The resident population of Rochdale as measured in the 2001 Census was 205,357. The metropolitan district covers 61.3 square miles (15,808 hectares) of land.

Once one of the ring of cotton towns around Manchester, Rochdale has had an interesting economic history. The cooperative movement began in Rochdale with the opening of the first Co-op shop by 28 workers on Toad Lane in 1844. Rochdale's radical streak was also demonstrated by its refusal to enact the Poor Law Amendment Act locally and build work houses.

Today Rochdale's local economy still has a strong element of manufacturing (27% of employment), which accounts for a higher proportion of jobs than the UK average (18%). However, as the manufacturing sector has declined, the service sector has grown with information and technology based companies leading the way into the future.

The IMD 2004 rank Rochdale as the twenty fifth most deprived local authority in England. The unemployment level is relatively high at 3.9% and over 40,000 of the population of Rochdale experience income deprivation and over 18,000 people of working age in the borough are experiencing employment deprivation.

Demographically; 49% of Rochdale's population is male and 51% is female, the average age of a person living in the local authority is 37. Rochdale is a culturally diverse local authority; 88.6% of the population are White British, 9.8% are Asian/Asian British, 1.9% are White Irish and 0.3% is Black/Black British. 72.1% of the population describe themselves as Christians, 9.4% describe themselves as Muslim and only 10.4% describe themselves as being of no religious faith.

Strategic framework

Pride of Place and Aiming High, the Council's Community Strategy and Community Plan, provides the ethos and structure for specific initiatives and is strongly committed to the principle of community partnership. Programmes that promote community safety and representation are council priorities. Rochdale is less than 10 miles from Oldham and Burnley and has firmly embedded the community cohesion agenda in its strategies and policies.

Future plans

The Township structure is now a mature model which already embraces key partners and this will remain a key element in the drive to increase participation. Work will continue to further devolve relevant budgets and powers to Township Committees.

The council aims to include a specific civil renewal headline in its LPSA Round 2 submission.

Case studies

Rochdale Town Team and Area Forum

Background and aims

In 1992 a decision was taken by the Council to divide the borough of Rochdale into four areas which would have power and services devolved to them. This followed a previous decentralisation of services to 11 Neighbourhood Teams across the Borough. The decision was informed by a Mori poll that said most people had no trust in the council and found it to be remote and bureaucratic.

The Townships boundaries were drawn on the basis of local perceptions of what were traditional communities and reflected the position before the 1974 local government reorganisation. Each Township has its own committee with the status of a Council Standing Committee and has full executive authority. Each Township also has its own locally defined strategy on regeneration and housing.

In 2000 a decision was taken to evolve the Township model further through the creation of area forums facilitated by Township staff. This decision was based on a desire to make closer links with communities, to cover more communities in depth and to involve people that had not been involved

before. It was also an attempt to co-ordinate and structure the numerous consultation exercises that deprived communities were being asked to get involved in. The Forums were intended to create a focus for consultation and make it easier for local people to get involved.

What has it done?

Rochdale Area Forums are in some cases existing groups such as community councils or renewal area committees. Where there were no appropriate groups they were promoted and formed by Township staff. Wards have one or two forums each. They meet in community venues and depend on the existence of community facilities. They are attended by representatives of local groups, by community activists, by statutory agencies, by councillors and by local people who are not otherwise involved in any group. The meetings are facilitated and attended by the Township officers, who create a consistent point of reference, spread information, generate interest and will take issues from the forum and ensure a response. The Area Forums are represented on the LSP and minutes go to the Township

Committees and the Council.

On average, 25-35 people attend the forums. Specific groups are targeted by Township officers if they tend to be excluded or disempowered and officers will ensure that people have a chance to speak, or that the issues that concern them are debated. Meetings are chaired by trained members of the community and representatives to the LSP are also trained. Every Forum has presentations on how the system of local government works.

Local people have said that they use and value the forums because they can get answers and action on the local issues that concern them. Forums are a safe and unthreatening space for debate and people appreciate knowing what is about to happen to their area.

The forums give the Council the opportunity to spread understanding of the range and limits of local government and to highlight when local people need to take action to create change. They give the community a channel for influencing the decisions of agencies outside the Council, where local priorities do not necessarily drive policy or generate direct responses.

A key element in the spread of the forums has been the availability of the Town Team officers to recruit, enable and empower people and the existence of the Township structure to provide a local ethos and focus for services. Townships have their own Police Inspector, Anti-Social Behaviour officers, Community Safety Officers and Crime and Disorder

Partnerships. The Area Forums give local people a direct link into these services and allow Township officers and other services to respond quickly to emerging problems such as intimidation burglary and car crime.

Currently there are plans to extend the number of area forums and their powers of scrutiny of action plans.



Middleton Township enabling older residents to put their views across

Outcomes

- Domestic burglary dropped by between 18%-50% from 2003-2004 in three target wards
- Vehicle crime fell by 28%
- Police and PCT boundaries have been redrawn to reflect community perceptions, bringing three major statutory service providers into closer relationships with the community
- Regular attendance at forums by people not otherwise engaged
- Services responding directly to the forums
- Local people bring specific issues to the forums rather than making general complaints as they know these will be raised with the appropriate department or agency, and will get a response.

Youth Inclusion Project

Background and aims

The Langley Estate is a neighbourhood with high levels of deprivation, unemployment, crime and exclusions. The Middleton ward which the estate is part of ranks sixty sixth in the deprivation indexes. The incidence of crime, anti-social behaviour and exclusions was worse in the Middleton ward than in other deprived areas in the Borough. Previous funding from SRB and neighbourhood renewal had no effect on crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour.

In 2000 Youth Inclusion projects were being set up across the country and Langley was identified as a prime setting for a project. The Youth Inclusion Project (YIP) was set up in September 2000 in the neighbourhood of Langley to target the 50 young people most at risk of offending, anti-social behaviour and exclusion, identified by agencies such as the Police, schools, housing and education welfare. The aim was to engage young people through a variety of projects and reduce truancy and offending.

The agencies involved in setting it up were the Youth Offending Team, Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership, Greater Manchester Police, Education Welfare, Housing and Crime Concern. Throughout the project statutory, voluntary and community agencies have been brought together and initiatives linked up to ensure maximum impact.

What has it done?

Over the four years since it was set up 1,000 young people aged 13-16 have taken part in the project, many of whom were prolific offenders. It has also involved parents as volunteers and community groups. The initiative worked by engaging young people on the streets and building relationships with them. Workers targeted hot spots for trouble and encouraged young people to become involved in diversionary activities. They were offered a range of opportunities, some at peak times for offending such as midnight

basketball and given the chance to be involved in the planning and decision making processes. They were then moved into workshops that provided training and life skills and into participation in community activities and community safety projects.

Young people from the project have gone on to be Neighbourhood Wardens and to work with other young people in the Junior Neighbourhood Warden initiative. They facilitate and participate in early intervention panels. These are both enabled and informed by young people from YIP, many of whom were offenders, who bring their detailed local knowledge of those at risk, or those with court orders, to the agencies who can design a support package and divert young people from a life time of crime and exclusion. The early intervention panels bring together all the agencies concerned in anti-social behaviour and detailed action plans are made for a co-ordinated early response to young people at risk.

Young people from the project who would have otherwise been absorbed in gang culture and offending are now invited by local groups to participate in events. They set up their own groups and projects and go out to make presentations on their achievements to other groups. They have been equipped to act as involved citizens and community leaders. Their impact on statutory services and on their community has completely reversed from negative to positive.



Engaging young people in community activities

Outcomes

- Arrest rates in the target group were reduced by more than 60% in the first year of the project in the Langley area
- Youth nuisance in the Langley area has been reduced to the point where it is no longer of special concern to the police
- A new project in North Middleton reduced annoyance and criminal damage by 50% in its first four months
- The Middleton Ward has moved from being the worst in the borough for anti-social behaviour to being the third best
- Previously disaffected young people now generate and participate in environmental improvement projects and have motivated local people to take a pride in their area
- Previously disengaged young people are now requested to attend local events and conferences as youth leaders and role models.

Junior Neighbourhood Wardens

Background

The initiative was set up in the summer of 2003 by the Bowlee Park Housing Association and the Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme. It was set up to address a perceived gap in services for 9-11 years olds who fell between children's services and youth services. The aim of the initiative was to recruit 170 children, give them a structure for making a contribution to their community, build their self respect and demonstrate their ability to make a commitment and develop a sense of responsibility.

What have they done?

The Junior Wardens are given uniforms and books in which they record problems in the area such as vandalism, graffiti, repairs, dangerous or poorly maintained buildings and paths. These are reported to the Neighbourhood Wardens, three of whom are young

people from the area and one of whom was a young offender. The junior warden with the most reports in the month is rewarded with a family outing.

The initiative provides citizenship training and environmental and property maintenance training. The Junior Wardens help community groups with environmental projects, such as maintaining gardens in sheltered accommodation. Because of the kind of physical work being undertaken and the numbers of children involved their families also become involved as volunteers to supervise and help the children.

Becoming a Junior Warden is now a matter of some pride for young people. In order to become wardens they must have a clear record with schools and police for at least three months and this creates new motivation for those at risk of offending, truanting or exclusion.

The local community respects the Junior Wardens and reacts positively to them. The Wardens have a way to contribute to their community that they did not have before.

The initiative has cost £3,000 to date.

Outcomes

- 170 young people empowered to take part in local projects
- Adults encouraged to invest in their neighbourhood by making improvement in the local environment
- Young people are acting as role models.

Operation Street Sports

Background

The initiative began in October 2003 and ran until August 2004. It was based on experience gained in other short term sports initiatives that there was considerable tension, aggression and racism arising in activities run for young people that seemed to be reflecting their situation and experiences in their communities. It was also based on the knowledge that young people were getting into trouble for lack of focused activity and local communities were suffering as a result. The initiative was intended to tackle these issues by establishing more trusting relationships with young people, getting to know their social groups and the problems they faced and getting them into focused activities where they could learn leadership skills and coach other young people.

What did it do?

The initiative was based in a housing office in the community and worked in 17 neighbourhoods, targeting eight per week. It used facilities in the heart of the community and started by building relationships with community groups and young people. It also targeted Asian communities traditionally seen as hard to reach and found that word of mouth was enough to fill the sessions in these communities.

The initiative provided open access sports sessions. It used the coaching sessions and sports activities in the heart of communities as a way of identifying suitable volunteers in that community and encouraging them to take part in training courses, run through a Sports Train Programme. This method was very successful though a lengthy process, setting up

the sessions, identifying volunteers, encouraging them to attend a course, getting them through the course and encouraging them to volunteer to coach other young people. Over the time of the initiative young people were helped to understand how to create a community sports session and the commitment it requires.

Over 20 inter-estate football tournaments were held with 161 teams and 966 players in the first 18 months of the initiative with great success. These continue on a regular basis due to the popularity of the events and the numbers of young people they attract. All the teams were set up informally by young people themselves, no adults supervised any of the teams, and each has its own team name and captains. The initiative has now secured further funding for two full time community coaches who will build on the work done so far.

Outcomes

- 47 young people participated in a training opportunity, becoming skilled in leadership and receiving a nationally recognised accredited award
- In excess of 200 young Asians engaged
- Young people empowered to organise themselves and set up 20 inter-estate football tournaments with 161 teams and 966 players over the past 18 months
- Young people have positive personal relationships with Council sports workers and the workers are well known in the community.

Sheffield



Children and families, happy to participate

Sheffield

Background

Sheffield is a modernised industrial city in South Yorkshire in the north of England, nestling between seven hills and the confluence of five rivers. Sheffield is the biggest city in Yorkshire and the fourth largest city in England. Its resident population, as measured in the 2001 census, stands at 513,234. Sheffield is a unitary metropolitan local authority and the local authority area covers 140.28 square miles (36,333 hectares) of land.

Sheffield's economy was founded on the cutlery and iron and steel trades, but like the rest of the North, Sheffield has had its share of tough times. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the city suffered severe industrial decline and lost around a quarter of its jobs. Nowadays, substantial areas of multiple deprivation exist in the north, east and central areas. This contrasts sharply with areas of marked affluence in the south west of Sheffield and this makes Sheffield one of the most unequal cities in England¹³.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004 ranks Sheffield as the sixtieth most deprived local authority in England. It has a high unemployment rate at 4.2% and around one third of Sheffield's wards have consistently scored high in the indexes of deprivation. This has placed them in the most deprived 10% of wards in England – some of these are actually among the most deprived 1%¹⁴.

Demographically 49% of the population are male and 51% are female and the average age of a person living in Sheffield is 38.5. Sheffield is a multicultural city; 91.2% of the population are White British, 3.15% Pakistani, 1% Caribbean, 0.6% African, 0.6% Indian, 0.6% White Irish and 0.4% Bangladeshi. 0.8% of the population comes from Chinese or other ethnic groups. 68.8% of the population describe themselves as Christian, 4.6% as Muslims and 17.9% are of no religious faith.

Strategic framework

The council ensures that there is a consistent strategic framework that includes the national neighbourhood renewal strategy, national floor targets, the Local Strategic Partnership and local council priorities such as the Closing the Gap policy which forms the basis of Sheffield's approach to neighbourhood renewal. Inclusion and equality is at the heart of strategy and delivery and the council has a corporate vision statement that states that all work takes place in the context of partnership with the community. This core belief is communicated to staff across the council with an expectation that they are accountable to the community and that they will carry out their work at all levels in a spirit of partnership.

The council has agreed an initial statement of commitment to civil renewal and is developing a wider shared statement of commitment to civil renewal, agreed with the community, the voluntary sector and service partners.

¹³ <http://www.sheffield.nhs.uk/resources/imd2000.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.sheffield.nhs.uk/resources/imd2000.pdf>

Future plans

The development of community engagement and active citizenship continues to be an important component in the development of regeneration strategies and initiatives, including the Council's work to develop Local Area Agreements, and Transformational Projects which is part two of the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

The Council will be developing a shared statement of commitment to civil renewal, which the local authority, the voluntary and community sector (VCS), local communities and partners all agree. This will include identifying key targets and dialogue to establish how this vision can be turned into a reality.

The council is conducting a stock take to identify existing activities that contribute to civil renewal and are potential catalysts for renewal in Sheffield. It will be identifying opportunities to enhance the VCS and development of local communities to become active citizens and engage with public agencies and partners.



The Primary Regeneration Project got people talking about early years' provision

Case studies

The Primary Regeneration Project Children and Family Services Consultation

Background and aims

The regeneration project began three years ago in the context of falling school numbers, poor attainment and dilapidated school buildings. The LEA launched the project to look at these issues and at proposals to build new schools and extend the council's early years provision in two areas of Sheffield. The Arbourthorne and Norfolk Park estates are one of the key areas in Sheffield City Council's Creating Successful Neighbourhoods Closing the Gap Initiative and are ranked amongst the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally and third most deprived neighbourhood in Sheffield.

The proposals for the two new schools included providing early years childcare for fifty weeks a year for children of three and over. There were already community child care organizations running early years provision in the area, but there were concerns that this was not as co-ordinated, as seamless or as comprehensive as would be desirable. This concern inspired a mapping and consultation process for this particular area of work and it was designed to build on the consultation process that had

been established as part of the planning process for the new schools. It aimed to generate discussion about how the proposals for the new services might link with and add value to the existing community-run early years childcare provision.

Initial mapping showed that the existing provision was complex and that a strategy was needed that could take this complexity into account and ensure a coherent new council service that built on what already existed, rather than duplicating services. The project began with a review of best practice and used this as a basis for discussion about integrated local childcare programmes and mainstream services.

What has it done?

A partnership group was set up with a mailing list of about sixty contacts of community, faith, voluntary and statutory agencies, and children, young people and family support agencies working at a neighbourhood, area and city-wide level.

The average attendance at the meetings was about 25 people and included a range of providers such as the local schools, community projects, Out of School Network,

Sheffield Community Childcare Network, Children's Participation Worker for Children's Fund, South East Sheffield Primary Care Trust Health Improvement Worker and Health Visitors, Sheffield Futures, Sure Start and Community Safety.

Two workers with local knowledge were seconded; the Park Heeley Area Co-ordinator, and the Young Children's Service Area Planner. They carried out a service provider audit of services for children, young people and families, looking at current provision, projected levels of provision, new services, gaps in provision, barriers to development and quality assurance issues.

56 services providers and local people attended a 'Putting the Jigsaw Together' event to explore the hub and satellite service delivery model and the Serving Children Well Framework.

The consultation engaged with parents, children, and young people through a range of community activities, e.g. fun days, coffee mornings, parent and toddler groups, school intake meetings and others, to find out about their needs and gaps in provision. Children

took part through activities such as pinning flags on a treasure island display to register their needs.

One innovative element of the consultation started at a fun day and a fathers' event. Families at the events were offered a free session with a professional photographer in exchange for participation in the consultation at a later time. The photos were then made available for people to pick up at drop-in sessions in schools and community centres, and local people were trained to attend these sessions and do questionnaires with people. When people saw the quality of the photos they were generally very pleased with the approach and happy to participate.

To feedback the results they used a display in the library and schools with the family photos and again had people available to talk about them and gather feedback.

Funding was set aside to provide a 'quick wins' programme of activities and since the consultation suggested that one of the things people wanted was more weekend activities, a sports bus was taken into the community at weekends. This delivered on the suggestions and provided an opportunity for gathering more feedback.

108 people (service providers and local people) attended a Making Children and Young People the Number One Priority feedback event. Children and young people were specifically targeted at this event for their views. Four young people made a video of the event and carried out interviews as part of the event evaluation. Eight young people from the local senior school's school council attended for lunch and held a group session with the Cabinet member for Education and Young People.

Throughout the consultation the face to face approach was crucial to let people know that what they said was important and that there was action as a result of what they had said.

Outcomes

- One new community school was completed in 2004 and another is due to be completed early in 2005
- An Extended Schools Co-ordinator will be appointed from April 2005 to support schools to extend the use of their facilities and resources and develop multi disciplinary working that reflects the needs of the local community
- Neighbourhood Renewal Funding has been secured for a Partnership Development Officer post with a emphasis on children, young people and parent voices
- A new service delivery model has been developed that integrates the Children, Young People and Family Support Strategy with action plans for Early Years, Children and Young Peoples' Services (0-16), Family Support and a local delivery partnership.

The Raising Attainment Project

Background

The project was established in January 2000 and led by the Local Education Authority. They used a substantial amount of SRB funding under the theme of Education and Employment.

What has it done?

The project employed Family Learning development workers, Home-school link workers and IT technicians. Workers were placed in each primary and secondary school. They were autonomous in terms of delivery but supported by the SPELL infrastructure and team, a community-owned project that helps local

people develop their employment skills and self-esteem and get into learning and jobs. During the lifetime of the project around 55 courses were delivered in a variety of subjects at both accredited and non-accredited level. The project also supported reading in pairs by parents and children and this had a significant impact on the literacy and comprehension skills of children at key stage 2.

Outcomes

- There was a rise in reading accuracy and comprehension. At one school reading improved by 7.3 months and comprehension by 11.7 months over a six week period, attaining level 4 at key Stage 2
- A substantial impact has been achieved on the learning activity of parents. This is either Family Learning or learning in their own right. Parents achieved up to level 3 and went on to employment and volunteer opportunities
- Primary school attendance has improved at one school from 91.17% to 92.42%.

Southey and Owlerton Area Regeneration (SOAR)

Background and aims

This is an area with a population of approximately 40,400 where all four wards were recognised by the Council as 'Closing the Gap' areas because they fall in the top 10% most deprived wards in the country. In the late 1990s a core group of community activists raised the issue of regenerating this area. In 1998 a series of Have Your Say Days were held across the area where local people came forward and identified what they thought the money should be spent on if the bid was successful.

The ideas from the Have Your Say Days were grouped under seven headings which formed the main themes of the bid and were the basis for the seven themed groups that were established to help move forward on each of the issues. The bid was submitted in 1999 and was successful in bringing £20.53 million into the area over seven years. The SOAR Board was set up to oversee the work of the seven themed groups and the spending of the money. From the beginning it was seen as important that the funding should be revenue based, pursuing social investment rather than physical results.

However two problems emerged as the process got underway: The structures did not reflect the neighbourhood picture – the Board and theme groups

covered the whole Southey Owlerton area but many people were only interested in their local patch and there were some concerns over the accountability of the community and independent representatives on the Board and theme groups and how they had been chosen. An early plan for the area was rejected by the community following rooftop protests about proposed demolition of Council housing stock. Two years into the programme a new direction and investment in community engagement began, creating a radical change in the way the process was approached.

What has it done?

SOAR created a new structure with a more local focus and more community control. It now supports three layers of community activity: the board has 12 community representatives chosen by community elections, four councillors and six independent places. Six neighbourhood action groups feed into an Area Panel and produce neighbourhood strategies and there are grassroots groups that tackle specific issues in each neighbourhood. The neighbourhood groups all have support from SOAR officers and are key elements of the structure. SOAR staff have been chosen specifically for their community involvement and engagement skills.

SOAR redrew the regeneration plans for the area using new methods of consultation. They also worked with the Area Panel to create neighbourhood strategies that were owned by the community, using creative arts based tools and images to develop ideas. The consultation strategy for the area followed a process that used events, walkabouts and workshops, reports and newsletters with an emphasis on feedback at every stage as projects were defined and refined and finally prioritised.

The proposals were also tested with partners to ensure their feasibility. The result was a plan understood, owned and accepted by the community. The process was regarded as a model and has won awards for its achievement in public involvement and social inclusion.

Now some 140 local people get involved in SOAR meetings every month. These groups develop local people's ideas for improving quality of life, formulate strategy for the area, approve funding for projects and oversee the quality of project delivery. The Neighbourhood Strategies are underpinned by the development of hub buildings and neighbourhood centres in each area. Each hub project is intended to provide space for community activity and delivery of services.

A major objective of SOAR is to support the development of an elected young people's advisory structure to work with the Area Panel and other decision-makers. This objective is being delivered through a youth empowerment project. The North Sheffield Youth Forum has been established with representatives from all six neighbourhoods and has undertaken research with over 700 young people to find out what they need from the regeneration programme. This research has informed the spending of £300,000 of SRB funding including Kerching, a community chest run by and for young people. YEP's charter for the participation and influence of young people has also been recognised as good practice citywide and has been adopted by Sheffield First for Children.

Support is also provided to individual community representatives and partners through the SOAR team and two corporate teams in the Council (one senior, one operational) implement the plans and projects identified in the Neighbourhood Strategies reports.

Outcomes

- The communication and consultation process achieved a high degree of ownership and meant that the new plan was accepted by the community
- Police have reported to the Crime and Community Safety Theme Group that since Replant reduced the height of the bushes there has been a drop in crime figures
- There has been a marked decrease in vandalism in the areas that have seen improvements
- In the first five months of the Full Employment Zone Project 15 out of 42 job seeker allowance claimants identified as a starting point have gone into work
- Feedback from young people in the youth empowerment project shows they feel they are more involved and have more of a voice in the area. They also feel they have gained new skills in organising meetings and making presentations
- Young people feel a local school has got more involved with them and is asking their opinions
- Kerching, a community chest run by and for young people
- House prices are rising.

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